

A REVIEW OF LITERATURE AND ART

Horizon

EDITED BY CYRIL CONNOLLY

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STENDHAL

THE PRIVILEGES OF 10 APRIL 1840¹

MAY God grant me the following diploma:

ARTICLE 1

Never any serious pain right up to advanced old-age; then, no pain but sudden death in bed from apoplexy, during sleep, without any moral or physical distress.

Every year, not more than three days of ill-health. The body and all its by-products to be quite odourless.

ARTICLE 2

The following miracles will neither be observed nor suspected by anyone.

ARTICLE 3

Whenever desired, the member to be as the index finger in regard to firmness and agility. Its shape two inches more than the big toe and of the same thickness, but pleasure by means of the said member to take place only twice a week. Twenty times a year the privileged one to be able to change himself into the being that he wishes, provided that that being exists. A hundred times a year he will speak for twenty-four hours any language he wishes.

ARTICLE 4

The privileged one having a ring on his finger and pinching this ring while looking at a woman, she will fall passionately in love with him as we know Eloise did with Abelard. If the ring is slightly moistened with saliva, the woman becomes only a tender and devoted friend. By looking at a woman and taking the ring

¹ These day-dreams represent a very little-known text of Stendhal, composed towards the end of his life (when a man of fifty-nine). They were first printed in *Les Quatre Vents*, No. 6 (Paris 1946) from which they are now translated. HORIZON considers that Stendhal's wishes, besides making pleasant summer reading, are of interest when read with the second part of Martin Turnell's article, and show that a great genius, even when death approaches, can sometimes prefer the air of humanism—however adolescent—to the odour of sanctity.

from the finger, all sentiments inspired by virtue of the foregoing privileges shall cease. By looking at a hostile being and stroking the ring on the finger hate changes into good-will.

These miracles can only take place four times a year for *l'amour passion*; eight times for friendship; twenty times for the disappearance of hate, and fifty times to inspire simple good-will.

ARTICLE 5

Fine hair, a good skin, excellent fingers which never peel, a delicate and gentle body odour. The 1st of February and the 1st of June every year the clothes of the privileged one revert to the condition they were in the third time he wore them.

ARTICLE 6

Miracles in the eyes of all who don't know him: the privileged one shall have the face of General Debelle, who died in St. Domingo, but without any imperfection. He shall play faultlessly whisk [*sic*], écarté, billiards, chess, but never make more than 100 francs at them. As a pistol shot, a horseman and a fencer he shall be perfect.

ARTICLE 7

Four times a year he can change himself into any animal he wishes, and afterwards change back into a man. Four times a year he can change himself into any man he wishes and furthermore concentrate that man's life into that of an animal. In case of death or impediment to the being into which he has changed, he shall revert immediately to the shape of the privileged one. Thus the privileged one can, four times a year, and for an unlimited time, in each case, occupy two bodies at the same time.

ARTICLE 8

When the privileged one is wearing on his person or his finger for two minutes a ring which he has kept for a moment in his mouth, he shall become invulnerable for the time he has decided upon. Ten times a year he shall possess the sight of an eagle and be able in running to make five leagues in an hour.

ARTICLE 9

Every day at two o'clock in the morning the privileged one shall find in his pocket a gold napoleon plus the value of forty francs in ready money in the currency of the country in which he finds

himself. Any money of which he has been robbed will be found the following night at two o'clock in the morning on a table in front of him. Murderers at the moment of striking or giving him poison will have a violent access of cholera for eight days. The privileged one can shorten these pains by saying, 'I entreat that so-and-so's sufferings stop altogether or are diminished in severity'.

Thieves will be seized with an access of extreme cholera for two days at the moment when they shall be ready to perform the theft.

ARTICLE 10

Eight times a year while out hunting a little flag shall reveal to the privileged one an hour in advance what game there is and its exact location. One second before the game takes to flight the little flag will be luminous. It is understood that the flag shall be invisible to anyone except the privileged one.

ARTICLE 11

A small flag shall point out to the privileged one statues hidden underground, under water or by walls. Also what these statues are, when and by whom made and the price one could receive for them after discovery. The privileged one can change these statues into a ball of lead of the weight of a quarter of an ounce. The miracle of the flag and the successive changing of the statue into a small ball and back again into a statue to take place not more than eight times a year.

ARTICLE 12

The beast which the privileged one mounts or which draws the carriage in which he travels will never fall ill or fall down. The privileged one can unite himself with this animal in such a way as to inspire him with his wishes while participating in his sensations. Thus the privileged one when riding a horse will make but one animal with him and dictate his own will. The animal thus united with the privileged one will have three times the strength and courage which it possesses in its normal state.

The privileged one transformed into a fly, for example, and united with an eagle will form one being with that eagle.

ARTICLE 13

The privileged one is unable to pilfer; if he tries to do so, his organs would not permit the action. He can kill ten human

beings a year, but no one to whom he shall have spoken. For the first year he can kill a human being provided he has not spoken to him more than twice.

ARTICLE 14

Should the privileged one wish to relate or reveal one of the articles of this diploma, his mouth would be unable to form any sound and he will have tooth-ache for twenty-four hours.

ARTICLE 15

The privileged one taking a ring in his finger and saying, 'I entreat that noxious insects be annihilated', all insects within six metres of the ring in every direction to be smitten with death. These insects are fleas, bed-bugs, lice of every description, crabs, gnats, flies, rats, etc.

Snakes, vipers, lions, tigers, wolves and all poisonous animals, seized with fear, will take flight and shall withdraw to a league's distance.

ARTICLE 16

Wherever he is, the privileged one, after having said 'I pray for my food' shall find: two pounds of bread, a steak done to a turn, a leg of mutton *idem*, a dish of spinach *idem*, a bottle of St. Julien, a carafe of water, dessert and ice-cream and a *demi-tasse* of coffee. This prayer to be granted twice every twenty-four hours.

ARTICLE 17

Ten times a year by request the privileged one will never miss either with rifle or pistol or with a blow from any kind of weapon. Ten times a year he can perform feats of arms with twice the strength of his opponent, but he shall be incapable of administering any deadly wound or one which causes pain or disablement for more than 100 hours.

ARTICLE 18

Ten times a year the privileged one by request, will be able to diminish by three-quarters the suffering of anyone he sees; or this person being at the point of death, he can prolong his life by ten days while diminishing his actual suffering by three quarters. He can also by request obtain for the person in pain a sudden and painless death.

ARTICLE 19

The privileged one can change a dog into a beautiful or an ugly woman: this woman will offer him her arm and will have the

intelligence of Madame Ancilla¹ and the heart of Melanie.² This miracle can renew itself twenty times a year.

The privileged one can change a dog into a man who will have the figure of Pepin de Bellisle and the intelligence of Monsieur Koreff, the Jewish doctor.

ARTICLE 20

The privileged one will never be more unhappy than he has been from 1 August 1839 to 1 April 1840. Two hundred times a year the privileged one can reduce his sleep to two hours which will produce the physical effects of eight hours. He will have the eyes of a lynx and the agility of Debureau.

ARTICLE 21

Twenty times a year the privileged one can read the thoughts of everyone who is around him up to twenty metres distance. A hundred times a year he can see exactly what the person he wishes is doing, with the complete exception of the woman whom he loves the most.

There is also an exception for dirty or disgusting actions.

ARTICLE 22

The privileged one can earn no more money than his sixty francs a day by means of the privileges here announced. One hundred and fifty times a year he can obtain by request that such and such a person entirely forgets his existence.

ARTICLE 23

Ten times a year the privileged one can be transported to any place he wishes at the rate of one hundred leagues an hour. During the journey he will sleep.

¹ Madame Ancellot.

² Melanie Louason with whom he was in love in 1808. At fifty-nine years of age after thirty-two years of separation it is worth noting this reference in his wishful thinking.

A double number on the Arts in America, 160 pages, 5s., will appear simultaneously in England and the United States on 1 October.

ARNOLD TOYNBEE

RUSSIA'S BYZANTINE HERITAGE¹

I

If this were a sermon, not an essay, the inevitable text would be a famous line of Horace's: *Naturam expellas furca, tamen usque recurret*—'You may throw Nature out with a pitchfork, but she will keep coming back'.

The present régime in Russia claims to have made a clean cut with Russia's past—not, perhaps, in all minor externals, but at any rate in most things that matter. And the West has taken it from the Bolsheviks that they have done what they say. We have believed and trembled. Yet reflection suggests that it is not so easy to repudiate one's heritage. When we do try to repudiate the past, it has, as Horace knew, a sly way of coming back on us in a thinly disguised form. Some familiar examples may bring the point home.

Thus, it looked as though the Restoration of 1660 had revolutionized the religious life of England by reuniting an English Protestant Church which had split, before the close of the sixteenth century, into an Episcopalian and a Presbyterian faction. Appearances, however, were illusory; for the sixteenth-century breakaway from Episcopalianism reasserted itself in the eighteenth century in the emergence of the new Methodist type of Nonconformity.

In France, again, Roman Catholic orthodoxy has been disappointed, time and again, of the hope that it had succeeded in re-establishing religious uniformity once for all by suppressing a heresy. The Albigenses were suppressed, only to break out again as Huguenots. When the Huguenots were suppressed in their turn they broke out again as Jansenists, who were the nearest thing to Calvinists that Roman Catholics could be. When the Jansenists were quashed they broke out again as Deists; and today the division of the French into a clerical and an anti-clerical

¹ Originally given as the Armstrong Lectures for 1947 in the University of Toronto.

faction still reproduces the thirteenth-century division between Catholics and Adoptionists (or whatever the doctrine may have been that the Albigenses really held), in spite of repeated attempts, during the last seven centuries, to dragoon the French people into religious unity.

In the light of these obvious historical illustrations of Horace's theme, let us try to look into the relation of present-day Russia to Russia's past.

Marxism wears the appearance of being a new order in Russia because, like the new way of life introduced into Russia in an earlier chapter by Peter the Great, it came from the West. If these fits of westernization have been spontaneous, it might be plausible to present them as genuine new departures. But has Russia been westernizing herself voluntarily or under duress?

On this point, the present writer's personal beliefs are as follows. For nearly a thousand years past, the Russians have, as he sees it, been members, not of our western civilization, but of the Byzantine—a sister society, of the same Græco-Roman parentage as ours, but a distinct and different civilization from our own, nevertheless. The Russian members of this Byzantine family have always put up a strong resistance against threats of being overwhelmed by our western world, and they are keeping up this resistance today. In order to save themselves from being conquered and forcibly assimilated by the West, they have repeatedly been constrained to make themselves masters of our western technology. This *tour de force* has been achieved at least twice over in Russian history: first by Peter the Great, and then again by the Bolsheviks. The effort has had to be repeated, because western technology has kept on advancing. Peter the Great had to master the arts of the seventeenth-century western shipwright and drill-sergeant. The Bolsheviks had to get even with our western industrial revolution. And no sooner have they done that than the West gets ahead of Russia again by discovering the 'know-how' of the manufacture of the atom bomb.

All this puts the Russians in a dilemma. In order to save themselves from being completely westernized by force, they have to westernize themselves partially, and in this they have to take the initiative if they are to make sure of both westernizing in time and of keeping the repugnant process within bounds. The fateful question is, of course: Can one manage to adopt an alien

civilization partially without being drawn on, step by step, into adopting it as a whole?

We may feel our way towards an answer to this question by glancing back at the principal chapters in the history of Russia's relations with the West. In the West we have a notion that Russia is the aggressor, as indeed she has all the appearance of being when looked at through western eyes. We think of her as the devourer of the lion's share in the eighteenth-century partitions of Poland; as the oppressor of both Poland and Finland in the nineteenth century; and as the arch-aggressor in the post-war world of today. To Russian eyes, appearances are just the contrary. The Russians see themselves as the perpetual victims of aggression from the West, and, on the longer historical perspective, there is perhaps greater justification than we might suppose for the Russian point of view. A detached investigator, if such could be found, might report that the Russians' eighteenth-century successes against Sweden and Poland were counter-offensives, and that their gains in territory in these counter-offensives are less characteristic of the relations between Russia and the West than the Russian losses of territory to the West both before and after.

'The Varangians,' who founded the first rudiments of a Russian State by seizing command of the navigable inland waterways and thereby establishing their domination over the primitive Slav populations in the hinterland, seem to have been Scandinavian barbarians who had been stirred up and set moving—eastward as well as westward—by the northward march of western Christendom under Charlemagne. Their descendants in their home country were converted to western Christianity and appeared, in their turn, over Russia's western horizon as the latter-day Swedes: heathen transformed into heretics without having been cured of being aggressors. Then again, in the fourteenth century, the best part of Russia's original domain—almost the whole of White Russia and the Ukraine—was shorn away from Russian Orthodox Christendom and annexed to western Christendom through being conquered by the Lithuanians and the Poles. (The fourteenth-century Polish conquests of originally Russian ground in Galicia were not recovered by Russia till the last phase of the war of 1939-45.)

In the seventeenth century, Polish invaders penetrated the hitherto unconquered part of Russia as far as Moscow, and were

driven out only by a supreme effort on the Russian side, while the Swedes shut Russia off from the Baltic by annexing the whole east coast down to the northern limits of the Polish dominions. In 1812 Napoleon repeated the Poles' seventeenth-century exploit; and, after the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, blows from the West came raining down on Russia thick and fast. The Germans, invading her in the years 1915-18, overran the Ukraine and reached Transcaucasia. After the collapse of the Germans, it was the turn of the British, French, Americans and Japanese to invade Russia from four different quarters, in the years 1918-20. And then, in 1941, the Germans returned to the attack—more formidable and more ruthless than ever. It is true that, during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Russian armies also marched and fought on western ground, but they came in always as allies of one western power against another in some western family quarrel. In the annals of the centuries-long warfare between the two Christendoms, it would seem to be the fact that the Russians have been the victims of aggression, and the westerners the aggressors, more often than not.

The Russians have incurred the hostility of the West through being obstinate adherents of an alien civilization, and, down to the Bolshevik revolution of 1917, this Russian 'mark of the beast' was the Byzantine civilization of Eastern Orthodox Christendom. The Russians embraced Eastern Orthodox Christianity at the end of the tenth century, and it is significant that this was a deliberate choice on their part. Alternatively they might have followed the example of either their south-eastern neighbours, the Khazars, on the steppes, who had been converted in the eighth century to Judaism, or their eastern neighbours, the White Bulgarians, down the Volga, who had been converted in the tenth century to Islam. In spite of these precedents, the Russians made their own distinctive choice by adopting the Eastern Orthodox Christianity of the Byzantine world; and, after the capture of Constantinople by the Turks in 1453 and the extinction of the last remnant of the East Roman Empire, the principality of Moscow, which by then had become the rallying point of Russian Orthodox Christendom against both Moslems and Latins, self-consciously took over the Byzantine heritage from the Greeks.

In 1472 the Grand Duke of Moscow, Ivan III, married Zoë Palæologos, a niece of the last Greek wearer, at Constantinople,

of the East Roman Imperial Crown. In 1547 Ivan IV ('the Terrible') had himself crowned Czar or East Roman Emperor—and, though the office was vacant, his assumption of it was audacious, considering that, in the past, Russian princes had been ecclesiastical subjects of a Metropolitan of Kiev or Moscow who had been a subordinate of the Œcumenical Patriarch of Constantinople—a prelate who, in his turn, was a political subject of the Greek Emperor at Constantinople whose style, title and prerogative were now being assumed by the Muscovite Grand Duke Ivan. The last and decisive step was taken in 1589, when the reigning Œcumenical Patriarch of Constantinople, now a servant of the Turks, was induced or coerced, during a visit to Moscow, to raise his former subordinate the Metropolitan of Moscow to the status of an independent patriarch. Though the Greek Œcumenical Patriarch has continued, down to this day, to be recognized as *primus inter pares* among the heads of the Orthodox churches—which, though united in doctrine and liturgy, are independent of each other in government—the Russian Orthodox Church, from the moment when its independence was conceded to it, became the most important of all the Orthodox Churches *de facto*, since it was now by far the strongest in numbers and was also now the only one that enjoyed the backing of a powerful sovereign State.

From 1453 onwards Russia was the only Orthodox Christian country of any account that was not under Moslem rule, and the capture of Constantinople from the Turks was dramatically avenged by Ivan the Terrible when he captured Qazan from the Tatars a century later. This was another step in Russia's assumption of the Byzantine heritage, and Russia was not just being cast for this role by the blind working of impersonal historical forces. The Russians knew well what they were about: in the sixteenth century, the policy was expounded with arresting clarity and confidence in a celebrated passage of an open letter addressed to the Grand Duke Basil III of Moscow, whose reign intervened between those of the third and the fourth Ivan, by the monk Theophilus of Pskov:

'The Church of Old Rome fell because of its heresy; the gates of the Second Rome, Constantinople, have been hewn down by the axes of the infidel Turks; but the Church of Moscow, the Church of the New Rome, shines brighter than the Sun in the

whole Universe. . . . Two Romes have fallen, but the Third stands fast; a fourth there cannot be.'

In thus assuming the Byzantine heritage deliberately and self-consciously, the Russians were taking over, among other things, the traditional Byzantine attitude towards the West; and this has had a profound effect on Russia's own attitude towards the West, not only before the Revolution of 1917 but after it.

The Byzantine attitude towards the West is a simple one, and it ought not to be difficult for westerners to understand. Indeed, we ought to be able to sympathize with it, because it springs from the same extravagantly improbable belief that we happen to hold about ourselves. We 'Franks' (as the Byzantines and the Moslems call us) sincerely believe that we are the chosen heirs of Israel, Greece and Rome—the Heirs of the Promise, with whom, in consequence, the future lies. We have not been shaken out of this belief by the recent geological and astronomical discoveries that have pushed out the bounds of our universe so immensely far in time as well as in space. From the primal nebula through the protozoon, and from the protozoon through primitive man, we still trace a divinely appointed genealogy which culminates teleologically in ourselves. The Byzantines do just the same, except that they award themselves the improbable birthright that, on our western scheme, is ours. The Heirs of the Promise, the people with the unique future, are not the Franks but the Byzantines—so runs the Byzantine version of the myth. And this article of faith has, of course, one very practical corollary. When Byzantium and the West are at odds, Byzantium is always right and the West is always wrong.

It will be evident that this sense of orthodoxy and sense of destiny, which have been taken over by the Russians from the Byzantine Greeks, are just as characteristic of the present Communist régime in Russia as they were of the previous Eastern Orthodox Christian dispensation there. Marxism is, no doubt, a western creed, but it is a western creed which puts the western civilization 'on the spot'; and it was therefore possible for a twentieth-century Russian whose father had been a nineteenth-century 'Slavophil' and his grandfather a devout Eastern Orthodox Christian to become a devoted Marxist without being required to make any reorientation of his inherited attitude towards the West. For the Russian Marxian, Russian Slavophil

and Russian Orthodox Christian alike, Russia is 'Holy Russia', and the western world of the Borgias and Queen Victoria, Smiles' Self-Help and Tammany Hall, is uniformly heretical, corrupt and decadent. A creed which allows the Russian people to preserve this traditional Russian condemnation of the West intact, while at the same time serving the Russian Government as an instrument for industrializing Russia in order to save her from being conquered by an already industrialized West, is one of those providentially convenient gifts of the gods that naturally fall into the lap of the Chosen People.

II

Let us look a little further into this Byzantine heritage of Russia's, which does not seem to have lost its hold on the Marxian Russia of today. When we turn back to the Greek first chapter of Byzantine history in Asia Minor and Constantinople in the early Middle Ages, what are our sister society's salient features? Two stand out above the rest: the conviction (mentioned already) that Byzantium is always right, and the institution of the totalitarian State.

The germ of the conviction of being always right first sprouted in the souls of the Greeks at a moment when, so far from feeling superior to the West, they were at a disadvantage that was intensely humiliating. After having made a mess of their political life for centuries, the Greeks at last had peace imposed on them by the Romans. For the Greeks, the Roman Empire was a necessity of life and at the same time an intolerable affront to their pride. This was, for them, a formidable psychological dilemma. They found their way out of it by making the Roman Empire a Greek affair. In the Age of the Antonines, Greek men of letters took possession of the idea of the Roman Empire by presenting it as a practical realization of the ideal kingdom of Plato's philosopher-king, while Greek men of action gained admission to the Roman public service. In the fourth century after Christ, the Roman Emperor Constantine planted his New Rome at Byzantium, on the site of an ancient Greek city. Constantinople was intended by its Latin-speaking founder to be as Latin as Rome itself, but by the time of Justinian, only two hundred years later, Byzantium had become Greek again—though Justinian was a zealous champion of the Latin language that was his, as well as Constantine's,

mother tongue. In the fifth century, the Roman Empire survived in its Greek and semi-Hellenized Oriental provinces when it collapsed in the West, including Italy itself. At the turn of the sixth and seventh centuries, in the time of Pope Gregory the Great, the Latin Old Rome was a derelict neglected outpost of an empire of which the Greek New Rome was now the centre and seat of power.

Down to this day, if you ask a Greek peasant what he is, and he forgets for a moment that he was taught at school to say 'Hellene', he will tell you that he is 'Romyós', meaning a Greek-speaking Eastern Orthodox Christian subject of an ideally eternal Roman Empire with its capital at Constantinople. The use of the name 'Hellene' to mean 'Modern Greek' is an archaistic revival; in popular usage since the sixth century of the Christian era, the antithesis between 'Roman' (now meaning Greek-speaking adherent of the Orthodox Christian Church) and 'Hellene' (meaning pagan) has replaced the classical antithesis between 'Hellene' (meaning civilized man) and 'Barbarian'. That may look like a revolutionary change, yet Nature 'will keep coming back', for the one thing which, for the Greek, is of supreme importance has remained constant in spite of this change. The Greek is always right. So long as the pagan Greek culture is the hallmark of superiority, the Greek glories in being a Hellene. But when the tables are turned and Hellenism, in its turn, is cast out to become Barbarism's bedfellow in the outer darkness, the Greek changes his tune and now proclaims himself a subject of the Christian Roman Empire. Hellenism may lose caste, so long as the Greek does not.

Having thus adroitly vindicated his title to be the true Heir of the Kingdom, whatever kingdom it might be, the Greek Orthodox Christian went on to put Latin Christendom 'on the spot'. In the ninth century the Greek Œcumenical Patriarch of Constantinople, Photius, pointed out that the Western Christians had become schismatics. They had tampered with the Creed. They had inserted an unauthorized *filioque*. Byzantium is always right, but she had a particular reason, at that moment, for putting Western Christendom in the wrong. Photius made his damaging theological discovery about the Latins during the first round of a political contest between Byzantine Christendom and Western Christendom in which Photius himself was a leading combatant.

This contest, like that between the United States and the Soviet Union today, was for the allegiance of a political and ideological no-man's-land lying between the two rival powers. In the ninth century the heathen who, during 'the Wandering of the Nations', had occupied south-eastern Europe from the gates of Constantinople to the gates of Vienna, began to feel attracted by the Christian civilization of their neighbours. To which of the two Christendoms should they turn for light? To the Greek Orthodox Christendom of the Byzantines? Or to the Latin Catholic Christendom of the Franks? Prudence suggested approaching whichever of the two Christian powers was geographically the more remote, and therefore politically the less dangerous; so the Moravian heathen, who were 'up against' the Franks, turned to Constantinople, while the Bulgarian heathen, who were 'up against' the Byzantines, turned to Rome—as Greece and Turkey today have turned to Washington, not to Moscow, because they lie on Russia's and not on America's threshold. When once these overtures had been made and had not been rejected, the competition between the West and Byzantium for the prize of south-eastern Europe had begun, and the stakes were so high that the rivalry was almost bound to end in rupture. The crisis which Photius had brought to a head was unexpectedly postponed by the irruption of the Hungarians. When this fresh horde of heathens established itself astride the Danube towards the close of the ninth century, Eastern Orthodox Christendom and Catholic Christendom were opportunely insulated from one another again. But upon the conversion of the Hungarians to Western Christianity at the end of the tenth century, the quarrel between the rival Christendoms burst out again and quickly festered into the definitive schism of 1054.

Thereafter, Byzantine pride suffered a terrible series of reverses. Frankish Christians from the west, and Turkish Moslems from the east, now fell upon the Byzantine world simultaneously. The interior of Russia, round Moscow, was the only part of Eastern Orthodox Christendom that did not eventually lose its political independence. The homelands of the Byzantine civilization in Asia Minor and the Balkan peninsula were completely submerged, and in the last phase of their discomfiture, on the eve of the second and final fall of Constantinople in 1453, the only freedom of manœuvre that was left to the Greeks was to choose between two

odious alien yokes. Faced with this grievous choice, the medieval Greek Orthodox Christians passionately rejected the yoke of their schismatic western fellow-Christians, and with open eyes elected, as the lesser evil, the yoke of the Moslem Turks. They would 'rather behold in Constantinople the turban of Muhammad than the Pope's tiara or a cardinal's hat'.

The feelings that determined this significant choice are on record in works of literature. During the Middle Ages, as today, the antipathy between the two rival heirs of Rome was mutual. Read the Lombard Bishop Liutprand's report to the Saxon Emperors Otto I and II of his diplomatic mission, in their service, to the Byzantine Court of Constantinople in the year 968. If you were sensitive solely to the tone and temper, and momentarily forgot the date, you might fancy that the author was an American visitor to Moscow in any year since 1917. Read the Byzantine Princess Imperial Anna Comnena's history of the reign of her Father the Emperor Alexius, who had to cope with the First Crusade. You might fancy that the authoress was a cultivated twentieth-century Frenchwoman describing the invasion of Paris by a wave of middle-western American tourists—at least, that is what you might fancy till you lighted on her description of the cross-bow, that deadly new weapon of which the westerners (in spite of being always wrong) had inexplicably discovered the 'know-how'. If only it had been discovered by the Byzantines, whose destiny is to be always right! This passage of Anna Comnena's history might be a Russian complaint in 1947 about America's monopoly of the atom bomb.

Why did Byzantine Constantinople come to grief? And why, on the other hand, has Byzantine Moscow survived? The key to both these historical riddles is the Byzantine institution of the totalitarian State.

Empires like the Roman or Chinese, which bestow peace for centuries on once war-ridden worlds, win so powerful a hold on the affections and imaginations of their subjects that these cannot imagine living without them, and consequently cannot believe that these supposedly indispensable institutions can ever really cease to exist. When the Roman Empire perished, neither contemporaries nor posterity acknowledged its demise, and, since their eyes refused to face the facts, they sought, at the first opportunity, to bring these facts into conformity with their fancy by conjuring

the Roman Empire back into existence. In the eighth century of the Christian era, there were determined attempts to revive the Roman Empire in both East and West. In the West, Charlemagne's attempt was a fortunate failure; but the attempt made by Leo the Syrian at Constantinople, two generations earlier, was a fatal success.

The crucial consequence of this successful establishment of a medieval East Roman Empire in the homelands of the Byzantine civilization was that the Eastern Orthodox Church fell back into subjection to the State.

In the pagan Græco-Roman world, religion had been part and parcel of secular public life. Christianity, springing up without the Roman Empire's leave, defended its freedom at the price of outlawry and persecution. When the Imperial Government came to terms with the Church, it seems to have expected that Christianity would slip into the dependent and subordinate position that an official paganism had previously occupied vis-à-vis the Roman State; and in the Greek heart of the Empire, where the Empire continued to be a going concern for nearly three centuries after the conversion of Constantine, this expectation was more or less realized—as witness what happened to St. John Chrysostom when he fell foul of the Empress Eudoxia, and to Pope Sylverius when he incurred the displeasure of the Emperor Justinian. Fortunately, however, for the Church, it was freed from its official cage by the Empire's collapse. Even at Constantinople, the Œcumenical Patriarch Sergius dealt with the Emperor Heraclius on equal terms in the supreme crisis of the seventh century, and in the West, where the Empire had broken down two hundred years earlier and was never successfully restored, the Church not only recovered its freedom but preserved it. In our western world for the most part, the Church has maintained its independence of the State and has sometimes even exercised an ascendancy over it. The modern free churches in Protestant countries and the medieval Catholic Church in a not yet divided western Christendom are alike in the main line of our western tradition, while the modern established churches in Protestant countries have been, on the whole, something exceptional in western history. Moreover, even where the Church has been re-subjected to the secular power in a western State, this un-western relation between Church and State has been tempered by the climate of

ecclesiastical independence which has been prevalent in western Christendom on the whole. In the Byzantine world, on the other hand, the successful re-establishment of the Empire in the eighth century deprived the Eastern Orthodox Church of the freedom that she, too, had momentarily regained. She did not re-enter the prison house without a struggle. The battle went on for about two hundred years, but it ended in the Church's becoming virtually a department of the medieval East Roman State; and a State that has reduced the Church to this position has thereby made itself 'totalitarian'—if our latter-day term 'totalitarian State' means a State that has established its control over every side of the life of its subjects.

The medieval Byzantine totalitarian State, conjured up by the successful resuscitation, at Constantinople, of the Roman Empire, had a disastrous effect on the development of the Byzantine civilization. It was an incubus that overshadowed, crushed and stunted the society that had conjured it up. The rich potentialities of the Byzantine civilization, which the Byzantine State nipped in the bud, are revealed in flashes of originality that burst out in regions beyond the range of the East Roman Empire's effective power, or in centuries subsequent to the Empire's extinction: the spiritual genius of the tenth-century Sicilian monk Saint Nilus, who made a new Magna Græcia in Calabria out of Christian Greek refugees from his native island, or the artistic genius of the sixteenth-century Cretan painter Theotokópoulos whom the West admires as 'El Greco'. The 'peculiar institution' of the Byzantine Society not only blighted these brilliant capacities for creation; it brought the medieval Byzantine civilization itself to the premature downfall that has been mentioned above, by making it impossible for the Byzantine world to expand without precipitating a war to the death between the Greek apostles of Byzantine culture and their principal non-Greek proselytes.

The subjection of the Œcumenical Patriarch of Constantinople to the East Roman Emperor created an insoluble dilemma when a heathen prince embraced Eastern Orthodox Christianity. If the convert became the Œcumenical Patriarch's ecclesiastical subject he would be recognizing, by implication, the political sovereignty of the East Roman Emperor, which would be an intolerable consequence for the convert. On the other hand, if he vindicated his political independence by setting up a tame patriarch of his

own, he would be claiming, by implication, to be the East Roman Emperor's peer, which would be an intolerable consequence for the Emperor. This dilemma did not worry the Russian convert-prince Vladimir and his successors, because the remoteness of Russia from Constantinople made the theoretical political overlordship of the East Roman Emperor innocuous there. But it did worry the princes of Bulgaria, whose dominions lay at the East Roman Empire's European threshold; and, when Bulgaria finally opted for Byzantium after a preliminary flirtation with Rome, there turned out not to be room for both a Greek Orthodox Christian East Roman Empire and a Slav Orthodox Christian Bulgaria in the same Byzantine world. The result was a Græco-Bulgarian hundred years' war which ended in the destruction of Bulgaria by the East Roman Empire in 1019, and which inflicted such deadly wounds on the victor that he succumbed, in his turn, to Frankish and Turkish attacks before the eleventh century was over. Russia alone in the Byzantine world of the day was saved by her remoteness from being engulfed by this cataclysm; and thus it was the latest convert to Byzantine Christianity that survived to become the Heir of the Promise—the destiny which, as the Byzantines believe, is not our western birthright, but theirs.

Russia's life, however, has not been an easy one on the whole. Though she owed her survival in the early Middle Ages to a happy geographical accident, she has had, since then, as we have seen, to save herself by her own exertions. In the thirteenth century she was attacked on two fronts by the Tatars and the Lithuanians, as the Greek homelands of the Byzantine civilization had been attacked by the Turks and the Crusaders some two hundred years before; and, though she eventually got the upper hand, once for all, over her adversaries on the east, she is still having to run her arduous race against the ever-advancing technological 'know-how' of the western world.

In this long and grim struggle to preserve their independence, the Russians have sought salvation in the political institution that was the bane of the medieval Byzantine world. Feeling that their one hope of survival lay in a ruthless concentration of political power, they worked out for themselves a Russian version of the Byzantine totalitarian State. The Grand Duchy of Moscow was the laboratory of this political experiment, and Moscow's service,

and reward, was the consolidation, under her rule, of a cluster of weak principalities into a single Great Power. This Muscovite political edifice has twice been given a new façade—first by Peter the Great, and then again by Lenin—but the essence of the structure has remained unaltered, and the Soviet Union of today, like the Grand Duchy of Moscow in the fourteenth century, reproduces the salient features of the medieval East Roman Empire.

In this Byzantine totalitarian State, the church may be Christian or Marxian, so long as it submits to being the secular government's tool. The issue between Trotsky, who wanted to make the Soviet Union an instrument for furthering the cause of the Communist world revolution, and Stalin, who wanted to make Communism an instrument for furthering the interests of the Soviet Union, is the old issue on which battle was once joined between St. John Chrysostom and the Empress Eudoxia, and between Theodore of Studium and the Emperor Constantine VI. In the modern, as in the medieval, Byzantine world the victory has fallen to the champion of the secular power—in consistent contrast to the course of history in the West, where it was the ecclesiastical power that won the day in the trials of strength between Gregory VII and Henry IV and between Innocent IV and Frederick II.

The Byzantine institution of the totalitarian State has not so far had the same fatal consequences for Russian Orthodox Christendom that it had in the homelands of the Byzantine civilization when it precipitated a war to the death between the medieval Greeks and Bulgars. But we do not know what effect this political heirloom in Russia's Byzantine heritage is going to have on Russia's fortunes now that she has to make the momentous choice between taking her place in a western world or holding aloof and trying to build up an anti-western counter-world of her own. We may guess that Russia's ultimate decision will be deeply influenced by the sense of orthodoxy and sense of destiny which she has also inherited from her Byzantine past. Under the Hammer and Sickle, as under the Cross, Russia is still 'Holy Russia', and Moscow still 'The Third Rome'. *Tamen usque recurret.*

GUSTAV REGLER

FOUR EUROPEAN
PAINTERS IN MEXICO

I OFTEN wonder if it is due to the landscape.

This wide swing of all horizons. This cruelly burnt earth which in its curves still shows the terror and the power of its volcanic beginnings. And add to this the cries coming out of the virgin woods with their naked trees; no leaves, but lush blooms, children of impatience. Then that desert of four arid months and in its wake the voluptuous season of thunder-storms when thoughts sprout like gorgeous orchids in rank exuberance. A haunted country which seems nearer both to cold infinite space and to the fiery marrow of the earth, nearer than most of the countries on this planet.

Those who did not refuse the adventure of voluntary exile nor the danger involved in their own vision found a home here that seemed to be a platform for perpetual departure. I am speaking of four European painters living in Mexico.

★ ★ ★

There is Leonora Carrington, of British descent, on her way back to the fairy-tales of her childhood. Her astonishing craftsmanship is reminiscent of the Pre-Raphaelites by the gracefulness of its detail; intimate to such a degree that she lifts off the façades of her bewitched houses and souls, as if those façades were but useless blankets or oppressive tombstones; at times, ironically, as if they were a hat. (I doubt if a non-British artist can find such a genuine joy in defying prejudices and traditional reality.) There is no respect either for the boundaries that separate organic and inorganic life. Mankind seems to become purified and honoured by an almost ecstatic melting into fauna, flora and mineral wonders. Leonora Carrington has laid down her own Mendelian laws, but there is nothing intimidating about her 'cross-breedings'. Everything is only recollection, the ebb and tide of past and future. Her dreams are daydreams of the wheat-fields. Or the playful excursions of does strolling to unrecorded royal courts. Or the flight of men from the grip of gravity into the startling cage of their subconscious.

Concerning her painting, she has taken no new road. Carrington is the gentle sister of the 'Dulle Griet' of Pieter Brueghel. Her towers do not assault the sky, as the Dutchman's did with the arcs of the 'Tower of Babel', that amazing quarry of human helplessness. Carrington has kept out of politics and thus out of the hectic court-room of recriminations. Her work is a florentine carnival, behind whose protection box-trees show an almost invisible contempt of mankind. Her colours show a deep feeling for the play of light in the feathers of her dream-birds. Her landscapes show the extent of her desires. Carrington illustrates, in the way in which one tells fairy-tales at the fountains of Bagdad. Yet often enough it becomes clear that the man whom she has listened to is not Harun Al Raschid, but Sigmund Freud of Vienna; but a smiling Freud who has allowed his pupil to wander freely around. She has liberated surrealism from the terror of chaos; even in her 'Temptation of St. Anthony' the saint has reached the healthy state where he considers objectively his second and third ego in its wrestling with the demon. Escape from British spleen might have driven this painter to the modish *art sauvage*. She had the genuineness to avoid that easy bluff: *épater le bourgeois*. She also avoided that strange return to the plunder of Victorian adornments and false richness; her angels, damsel-like servants and serf-headed butlers pierce through the ceilings of well-constructed castles in the most gentle revolt against stiffness and inhuman prejudices. I asked her about her attitude toward surrealism. 'It's the most healthy exercise; it's excellent,' she said.



A most revealing horizon spans from primitive art to the sophisticated art of our time. It is true that fatigue has made some modern painters look for the stones of the Easter Islands; they were out for 'the drug of the beginning'. Others search for their spiritual brothers. Alice Rohan-Paalen looked for them and found them. She reduced Man to the four or five short lines of his limbs and to the dot of his face, but preserved in the landscape the last and finest nuances of the rainbow, the delicacy of the autumn when nature's death multiplies the life of the colours. Alice Rohan's technique aids these vibrations, this invisible passage from world to world. She throws sand and cement over the multi-coloured grounds of her canvases and with the aid of her strong

and gentle hand she forms clouds and mist on the wet ground; there they float until the painter reappears to evoke from out of the double layer the contours of her dream-towns, her playful animals, her enchanted beaches and her treasure caves. The simple nail becomes the groping divining rod, searching for the sources, the springs of colour that a few minutes before had been buried under the grey clouds of sand. Nor is it just automatism and arbitrary fairy-tale play. It is a wholly conscious worship of old forms, a magic service to gods who are not ours, but whose significance and character the painter tries to evoke in her dreams. She turns to the mysterious assembly of gods who dominated our ancestors and who will again dominate our grandchildren in a safer future.

Among her often sad, beauty-laden poems Alice Rohan found the word for the spirit of our days: *nu jusqu'au sang*; her paintings deserve an equally profound appraisal: *Ils sont le retour le plus tendre aux premiers jours de la création*.

Mexico has given her much, but it has not induced her to create a facile folklore in all its archaic unwieldiness. Her hieroglyphs are legible to the fellahs of the Nile (one of her most nostalgic and serene pictures depicts this river's greatness) as well as to the cliff-dwellers of the canyon or the cavemen of Altamira. Whoever jumps into space-time back to the days of the volcanoes and the caves of the glaciers must have the strength to rise above national boundaries. Alice Rohan-Paalen's love of this country is not a provincial love for exotic flavours; it is a love for the purity of a world that has no calendar.



Gordon Onslow-Ford is a hermit, but not of the kind that subsists on grasshoppers and talks into the wind of the desert; he is a recluse of the pagan kind that sat on Capri and in the gardens of the Medici indulging in freedom while feeling the responsibility of disposing of so much time. In return he tries to give pictures of the space whose mystery he is hunting like an amorous hunter. He is obsessed by this hunt. There is no compromise with its surroundings; he very seldom shows his pictures. This spring I was the first and the only person to whom he showed his latest production.

He lives in a house of departure; it is situated in a remote village

of Mexican Michoacan, at the very edge of a lake, itself a boundary to infinite space; migratory ducks find their seasonal home in the reeds; the islands in front of the fenceless terraces are the vanishing dreams of the morning hours; mountains break into the valleys with overwhelming brutality; the edges of the lake seem to overflow. Nothing is certain, everything is in motion; and so are the pictures I saw.

Onslow-Ford has been painting there for six years; his is no exile and no flight. (More and more do I think that the majority of mankind are in flight from themselves and that the few who create are the exact contrary to escapists.) Onslow-Ford came here with hatred in his heart: hatred of the world's confusion and the mass-murder that had started again. This hatred is expressed in pictures like 'Crime meets Crime' and 'Propaganda for Love'. Although near to surrealism, Onslow-Ford did not stop there. 'The voyage of the painter' is a search for new subject-matter and represents (with all its hereditary affiliation to literary tendencies) an indication of a new form. Onslow-Ford's notes concerning this picture were addressed to André Breton; he mentions 'a stork flying in circles about a moving point to make a crystal that can reflect the sources of light without the risk of eminent destruction'. A confession of deep-rooted wishes. The source of light is at stake. Transparency is the first problem which haunts the painter when he leaves behind a world that can only burn and destroy. He has tried to get 'beyond the brick wall'. Nothing must be hidden. This child-like tenacity of the playful man (O Nietzsche!) leads him before landscapes where everything seems hidden. One night a volcano shakes his easel, reminding him of the most hidden forces of the earth, the fires of the magma. He paints the lake and mountains with an almost icy indiscretion, cuts the valleys into a blue and green puzzle; the coldness is alleviated by the constant presence of two personages with a rather abstract appearance, though they are definitely differentiated by their sex. The fear of so-called reality induces the painter to avoid any semblance with an existing thing. By expanding and courting these personages he transforms the landscape, which seems to come to life only through them. This looks like a retrenchment of the artist, but coming from highly decadent surrealism into primitive Indian villages, the painter has to reconsider himself and to search for new forms. The landscape is often formed by

swarms of dots, but like the figures who sometimes demand their elimination (such as in the landscape 'The Desert's Dazzling Furniture'), the dots have a similar request: not to be used in excess (and this is a request to all modern painters: not to fall too much in love with their startling techniques).

Onslow-Ford's second pre-occupation: space.

He wants to give imagination a chance when he mixes ten worlds, when he traces five horizons, when to the crystalline clarity of the rainy season he adds the dramatic emotions of nature around his 'molino' of impressions. He is aware that all this is a beginning; his technique and thoughts have advanced far enough for him not to hesitate to add to the 'dominated space' the poetical flavour which emanated from his former haunted surrealist period.

During one of our long conversations he described the processes of his work: 'While painting, my contact with nature is through the unconscious, and automatic drawing is to me what nature was to the nineteenth-century painter: a starting point'.

With all his British respect for old friendships he added, anticipating my question: 'I am grateful to André Breton, enemy of stuffed trophies, who has been presented with so many, for admitting me to the house, telling me about the family tree, showing me the way to the jungles and deserts of automatism which seem no less inexhaustible to me now than in 1938 when I had my first visions of the transparent, interpenetrating worlds of the mind'.

★ ★ ★

I feel a certain reluctance to write about Wolfgang Paalen.¹ During the last years I have accompanied him on his road, and I am afraid I shall be too fragmentary about him in so small a space; for this visionary painter is to me the first to have approached (in an emotional equation) that Promethean adventure which in fear and hope makes us talk of the coming atomic age. Paalen has given his pictures names, not titles: 'Les Cosmogones', 'Eroun', 'Ardah', 'Mother of Agate', 'Aerogyl', clearly indicating the cosmic obsession of his last work. Without aiming at a return to primitivism he goes to the 'Beginnings', as one of his pictures of 1946 is called; he leads us into 'starscapes', a happy nomenclature

¹For a further knowledge of Paalen's work see *Wolfgang Paalen* by Gustav Regler. Editions Nierendorf, New York, 1946.

invented by him. In his dissolving colours there is a striking similarity to the disintegration of matter into radiant energy. Not a descriptive realism, demonstrating by colours some recent result of modern physics, but a consciousness of interstellar space, a concept of multi-dimensional worlds that tries to bring mankind nearer to the mysteries which lie between the infinitely small and the infinitely large. In all his latest pictures Paalen presents us with an emotional synthesis of microcosm and macrocosm. He creates a sort of magnetic field of emotion in which square dots and elliptical segments are organized into constellations limited only by the orbits of their own particles. I was especially impressed by the constant reappearance of a geometrical sign which had startled me since my childhood when we had to learn about its breath-taking characteristics: the parabola. In Paalen's pictures everything becomes alive by the touch of this sign. There is nothing of the vanity of the absolute. Even human forms are subdued to the notion of the universe. The parabolas which might be interpreted as the eyes of his new personalities do not take in or see; they radiate the first signs of an unfolding world.

For some of his works Paalen sometimes made use of rare materials: magic paper which the Indians pulled and pressed out of the fragrant mulberry tree. The texture of this primitive ground makes Paalen's multi-dimensional compositions into tables which bear the commandments of a new generation—I mean the generation between the catastrophes that was driven into the Tibetan mountains of contemplation and is still connected with a stray globe through an implacable love. By this I am far from calling Mexico a Tibetan mountain, though it is strange to see how much these painters have matured here and how little was done in the same decade in Europe. There is some familiarity with cosmic events and cosmic catastrophes that directed all the four to paint their visions without compromise and free from any ism.¹ They all witnessed the birth of a new volcano. They felt the sullen greatness of the plateau where, as Paalen himself put it, death is ever more present than life; they felt its peculiar asteroid quality, its emptiness under a fathomless sky. The country helped them. As did this haunted age of ours that sometimes morbidly boasts of being an end, but is nevertheless a beginning.

¹Paalen, when asked about Surrealism, answered me with the bold statement: 'The time of the isms is over'.

EDMUND WILSON

A ROMAN SUMMER

1945

SET down suddenly in Rome today by an American army plane, and still feeling yourself a part of the American war-machine that has clamped itself on Europe, your first involuntary reaction to the Forum is likely to be that all that irrelevant old rubbish—the broken stones and the chunks of brick—ought to be cleaned up and carted away and the place turned into a nice public park. The columns, single prongs or small clusters that have lost their companions or mates, give the impression of useless old teeth that ought to be pulled to make room for the bridge-work of a modern colonnade. A playground for the Roman poor is what the Forum just now mainly serves for. Little children with grey clothes and dusty legs climb up on the loosely piled marble or play train, astride a fallen length of column, while their mothers sit around on scattered fragments. It is difficult to focus your mind to the consciousness that these rounded flags—with enormous lacunae among them, like the gaps in an ancient text—are actually the *Via Sacra*, where Horace met the bore. But the Temple of Faustina wrenches you up to confront that giant world, as it lifts out of the dirt and debris its tremendous steep brick steps and its façade of stupefying grandeur, a huge intact block of antique Rome. Below it, the Allied Commission has put up, for the instruction of the troops, a large sign in dubious English, which mixes Latin and Italian names:

‘Temple of Antonio and Faustina. Begun 141 A.D. following the death of Faustina, wife of Antonio Pius and who was declared a goddess by the Roman Senate. When the Emperor died he was made a Joint Patron Deity of the Temple.’

Beyond, on the Palatine Hill, stretches the shapeless agglomeration of the Palaces of the Caesars, with empty eyeholes in their grass-sprouted brick and, at the top, a fringe of pine and cypress that seem to have grown like the weeds, with no tending. Faceless though they have mostly become, the old sallow arches and fractured walls have the look of faded old men with tufts of hair growing out of their noses and ears. When you explore the stripped carcasses of these structures, with their entrails laid open and their

naked ribs, you find them ugly and rather repellent: it is hard to make head or tail of what was once organization and splendour. Descending into the dark vaulted chambers, you find nothing but human excrement. And the elegances and luxuries of a later time first gladden and then depress, as you find them defiled and neglected. You climb to a still thriving garden, enclosed by a low box hedge, which has roses hanging garlanded on stakes and plantings of red gladioli, yellow lilies, and magenta dahlias, and think at first sight that this part has been kept up; but, entering the maze behind it—box walls with a palm in the middle—you discover that it is now a latrine and that the little walls of hedge have been broken down where people have forced their way out. A grotto that must once have been charming, matted with a great growth of vines, from which water continually drips, enshrines a green and limpid pool, the clearness of which, however, reveals only a pulp of disgusting old papers. The Renaissance stone lion that guards it has one front paw broken off and is scribbled all over with initials.

The Palatine Hill is a favourite resort for the black British Basutoland troops. The Italians are afraid of these Africans, and they herd away here by themselves, sauntering along the paths or milling quietly among the ruins. You find groups of them, mingled with Sikhs, with whom they do not, however, associate, on a high point where a big arc of masonry opens on the empty sky, and where an unprotected gap in the walk discloses, in the bowels of a vanished palace, a great underground length of gallery: some cellar for stores and slaves, which, laid open after a thousand years of darkness by a recent collapse of the roofing, inspires, for the history-read visitor, a certain dread and awe. But for the Africans—who have been recruited by being told that the White Father was in danger and who have been surprised to find other Negroes who say they live in the United States—the splendours of the Caesars, Italy, Europe itself, cannot mean very much more than they did to Attila's Huns. The only consolation they find in Rome seems to be the low class of prostitutes who meet them toward nightfall in the Forum. The girls take them to a part of the ruins that has a row of little compartments and is just the thing for an improvised brothel.

The Borghese Gardens—into which you pass, at the top of the

broad Via Veneto, through the old chipped reddish weedy Roman wall and the stone gates with the modern eagles. Here you always find an atmosphere of gaiety, of leafage, of light bright colour—everything both larger and more casual than in a park in London or Paris, and enchanting with a freedom and felicity that are characteristic only of Rome—all a little not precisely tinselly, not precisely flimsy, but both slightly tempting and teasing the foreigner by a careless disregard of plan, a cheerful indifference to purpose, that, nevertheless, acquire a certain insolence from blooming among the monuments of so much solid civic building, so much noble and luxurious beauty. With all this behind them, these immense rambling grounds can afford to lack foundation, be perishable—like D'Annunzio's *Elegie Romane* and Respighi's *Fondane di Roma*.

I found myself almost every afternoon, when I had been to call for my mail, wandering up into the Borghese Gardens to read it and the Italian papers in a little out-of-doors café called La Casina del Lago. You went inside a special enclosure, shut off from the rest of the park by a little black iron fence, behind which were posted at intervals, whitish and dim in the shadow, a set of small antique statues, and walked along a gravelled alley vaulted with fine straight green oaks, which seemed marvellously cool and reposeful against the dirty main drive and the meridian heat: the strange blend of informality and grandeur that is so much the quality of Rome! Outside, you would have passed a wall, loaded down with midsummer vines, which just revealed sculptured griffins and the flank of an embedded sarcophagus; and now you met a grey ducal stone lion grasping a sheaf of stone arrows in his paw but pedestalled on some makeshift brickwork which on one side it overlapped. The casina resembled a temple: a small portico with classical columns. In front of it were little round tables sheltered by ample umbrellas and surrounded by wicker chairs, and wide-branching pink rhododendrons, growing out of large clay jars. A radio, concealed over a portico, was always warbling romantic opera or concert renditions of Mozart, often, curiously enough, announced as emanating, I suppose by way of records, from the Metropolitan Opera House in New York or the Boston Symphony Orchestra. The waiters were unobtrusive, sympathetic: they soon appeared, brought you apricot ice and little pink *pasti* in frilled paper cups, then drifted into the background and let you alone.

I read letters from P—— when I got them, and wished she were with me to go around with. Rome—even for Italians, apparently: the lovers in D'Annunzio's *Il Piacere*—ought to be seen as an historical pageant and in company with someone else. I haven't gone to many churches or museums. My idea has been that, sometime later on, I shall bring my children over to see them, as I was brought in my teens; and in the meantime, I have felt this spring as if the whole past of Rome had been pushed by the War into a history that is now finished. My attention is always on other things: on the phenomena of Anglo-Saxon, Germanic, Russian Soviet civilization that is taking over the world. The old routine of the tourist, reading up the earlier chapters of the story which is to culminate in his grandfather, his father, and himself, seems relegated to the archives now, like the final instalment of a serial bound up in the completed volume of a suspended magazine.

One Sunday I was asked to lunch to a place in the country some distance from Rome, and was driven there, in an official limousine, by one of the other guests, a rather important man from the British Foreign Office. There was also a uniformed English girl, whose father was in the Foreign Office also, and of almost top importance. They engaged in a conversation so low-voiced, laconic and private as to become almost telepathic. The first part of this peculiar interchange was more or less intelligible to a stranger—we were all sitting together on the back seat: Captain D. told Sir S. what she had done during the War with masterly matter-of-factness: she had apparently, in some capacity, been connected with the firing of anti-aircraft guns; and they talked about the effects of quinine—she had just come 'out' to Italy—which you were supposed to take to ward off malaria, but which, the girl said, would turn you yellow, so that she felt she'd rather risk malaria. But then their voices sank still lower, and there was nothing but Christian names and nicknames, monosyllabic questions and replies in a kind of code. The only name that I recognized was 'Winnie', who, Captain D. explained, lay in bed in the afternoon—'which nobody else is able to do'—and so came out 'full of beans' at night, when the Cabinet Ministers were tired. And there leaked through to me rather dimly one of those inevitable British stories about someone who had snubbed someone else in a sharp and satisfactory manner. Sir S. would

occasionally raise his voice and address a remark to me, as if I were sitting in another room.

All this time we were passing through a region that had been absolutely laid waste by the fighting. Of whole villages there was nothing left but rubble and empty shells—though the women still went back and forth, balancing jars on their heads, and the children played by the roadside, climbing on the old rusty guns that had been camouflaged with green dapplings and now lay about, sometimes belly up. Spattered and speckled walls, balconies hanging in shreds. The pink, white or yellow houses looked almost too soft for real buildings: a railroad station presented the aspect of a partially gnawed graham cracker, and one was reminded by other ruins of loaves of bread with the crusts rather clumsily sliced off or of dilapidated cardboard boxes from which most of the paper coat had been ripped and the grey underneath partly torn. One house, with its staircase exposed, looked like a broken conch-shell which shows the interior spiral. Another, with the staircase destroyed, had been equipped with a long ladder which gave access to some upstairs rooms still usable. In another, on an upper story, a family of little children were sitting around in their Sunday clothes—black suits, green and red dresses—in a room of which only two corners were left: below them dropped a precipice of ruin; but they had brightened what remained of the room with little pots of flowers, and seemed to have got used to living in the open. In the main square of a fairly large town stood a headless unidentifiable white statue, with one arm still pathetically upraised in a gesture that had no longer any meaning, perching on what looked like a rockery but was really a blasted pedestal.

Sir S. pointed out to his companion that the women were 'very well dressed compared with the women at home'. His tone about the Italians was invidious, but his opinion was not borne out by my own observations in England. The women in these roadside towns *did* look better than English women, but only because they had more *chic*. The bright little short dresses which they were wearing with bare legs were more vivid but less substantial than the clothes one saw in England. This was Sir S.'s only comment on the scenes through which we were passing till we came to a badly shelled cemetery which had once had a wall around it and which still bore, over its battered gate, the legend 'IN CHRISTO QUIESCENTES'. 'Sad to see that shattered!' he murmured.

But the longer you live in Rome—and as the charming and chilly spring gives way to the smothering summer—the more you feel the stagnation and the squalor that are the abject human realities left by the ebb of power and splendour. You notice, in a little side street, such as the Via dei Capucini, the stopped-up urinal that overflows the cobbles and the melancholy old sprawling black sandals that lie in shreds in the road; and you become unpleasantly aware of the long accumulation of excrement in the corners of the great grass-grown backstairs of the Church of Santa Maria Maggiore. The beggars begin to get on your nerves. Corrado Alvaro, the novelist, who has done a series of articles on beggars, tells me that they have a bus of their own, which brings them into town in the morning. The supposedly crippled paupers jump briskly out of the bus, make water against the wall, then go into their professional act, becoming paralysed, bent and pathetic. Not all are fakes, however, he says; and this soon becomes all too obvious. The streets are full of people who are wasted with malnutrition or suffering from various infections, some of them not even begging, but lying on curbs or in doorways in fevered stupors or with bloated feet. There are women with tiny ugly children whom they expose all day to the sun. Near the entrance to our hotel in the Via Sistina is a woman with a limp shut-eyed baby that always seems doped or dead; we try to think it is a fake made of rubber. One of the most ambitious begging efforts is a remarkable family orchestra which is absolutely indefatigable and always to be found in some public place. The father, with an accordion, is the principal performer, and around him cluster seven children, tooting and piping on instruments that look like miniature saxophones. One of the boys doubles with cymbals. The mother stands keeping time, holding a pale heavy-lidded baby. Sometimes they play *Lili Marlene* sometimes the *International*.

The street boys, the 'ragazzini', are all intent on illicit business. They are the visible communications of the network of the Black Market. If you so much as glance at one, he slides up to propose to you a woman and a room, or to offer to buy your cigarettes. Cigarettes are the great medium of exchange, and their price goes up or down in proportion to the number of Americans who happen to be in Rome that week. The normal price of a package seems to be two hundred and fifty lire, that is,

two dollars and a half, but it once sank to a hundred and twenty-five, when there were a lot of soldiers here on leave. The kids buy from the American soldiers cigarettes, clothes, and food, and take them home to their parents, who sell them at central exchanges. On one occasion a white G.I., who found himself with a dead-drunk Negro, asked a band of ragazzini whether they wanted 'to buy a black man'. They paid him twelve hundred lire, and the boys took the Negro off, stripped him, and sold everything he had on at a profit of several thousand lire.

The nights in Rome are unlike any nights that I remember in any other city. It seems queer, in the midst of a town that is populated as densely as Rome, to hear roosters crowing at dawn, and the persistent moan of a screech owl. It came back to me that the Latin word for screech owl was *strix*, and that there must always have been screech owls in Rome since the Romans had first called them that. I couldn't at first imagine where these chickens and owls made their homes, but came to the conclusion, later, that they must be in the Villa Medici. The absence of nocturnal traffic, due to the lack of oil and light, makes the city unexpectedly quiet so that the noises seem terribly loud: a shop-keeper pulling down his tin shutter startles you with a shattering crash, the exploding exhaust of a truck gives the effect of a ten-inch gun, the yowling of starved and exacerbated cats seems to emanate from souls in Hell, and the songs howled by drunken G.I.s are not very much more cheerful or pleasant. There is no way of missing a note of the depressing and interminable pounding of somebody playing the piano in the British Other Ranks hotel a few doors down the Via Sistina: this man knows only two or three tunes, but he occasionally attempts to vary them by starting on something new, always, however, giving it up, after groping out the first few bars, and returning to the same old bores.

And there is the desultory whistling of trains that do not sound as if they were really going anywhere. You seem to see them just standing in the station and peep-peeping at the sight of a brakeman, as a dog will start suddenly yapping at the sound of a passer-by—but futilely, annoyingly, pathetically. They make you feel, as nothing else does, that there are no more communications in Italy and that you lie there imprisoned in this pit of the past, where the flimsy constructions of the Fascist régime—which was supposed

to have made the trains run on time—have collapsed and joined the rest.

Under the clear pale-blue innocent dome of the sky, the swallows, at certain times of day, go flickering and twittering in swarms. There is a revue called 'Ma le Rondini Non Sanno', and, according to its eponymous song, what the swallows are fortunate not to know is 'what's going on down there'. As June turns into summer, the atmosphere of Rome seems to become more corrupt and turbid. The mess in our correspondents' hotel, the rations assigned to which are obviously being sold to the Black Market, has recently been getting so bad as to be sometimes completely inedible. The correspondents take it out on the waiters, who have been shifting from servility to surliness; and one day an American officer, who has something to do with the management, threw an appetizing dish on the floor, provoking, by this over-demonstration, the suspicion that he himself is responsible for our not getting the proper food. In order to escape these meals we have been going to the Fagiano in the Piazza Colonna, once one of the best restaurants in Rome and now a dining place for Allied personnel; but the Fagiano itself is deteriorating. As one drifts out, after a hot afternoon, into the tepid air of evening, down grey avenues where the slow apathetic people are spreading all over the pavements or through the dark cobbled pavementless side streets where brawlers are shouting at the top of their lungs, one feels that there is nothing left of the bright and varied surface of Rome but a brackish iridescent scum. At the Fagiano, with its old Roman columns embedded in a modern façade, one has a fancy that the respectable dinners which were still being served there this spring, have been actually dematerializing, vaporizing, into the murk of the summer dusk, which is itself the foul emanation of a humanity decaying and crawling like slugs in a fisherman's jar that has been left too long in the sun. The space around the Marcus Aurelius column is the Bourse of the Black Market. You cannot sit down in one of the cafés of the square without someone sitting down beside you and making you some sort of proposition. Now, you note, we have put up a barbed-wire barrier in front of the Fagiano to protect the army cars and keep the bickering and haggling crowd at bay.

The little boys get in, however, and stand at the open windows, and sometimes people hand them out bread.

* * *

Rome, on my return from England, seemed more fetid and corrupt than ever. The whole stretch from the gates of the Borghese Gardens down through the Via Veneto, the Via del Tritone and the Corso Umberto to the Piazza Venezia has been, as Moravia says, converted into one great brothel; and in the evenings of this dog-star summer, we all seem stewing like lumps of flesh and fat in a cheap but turbid soup that washes through this winding channel like the bilge of a Venetian canal. Prostitution, with the Americans here, has become, from the Roman point of view, so unprecedentedly, incredibly profitable that many girls have been brought into the streets who might otherwise have stayed at home or worked at decent jobs. The standard price that they try to keep up seems to be thirty thousand lire—that is, thirty dollars; but in other respects the thing has certainly reached a very low level. Bill Barrett is under the impression that the soldiers go further here than has ever been done anywhere in peacetime in dispensing with even the most sketchy preliminaries: the G.I. simply overtakes the girl, cranes around to get a glimpse of her face so as to be sure she is not absolutely repulsive, then grābs her; she allows herself to be grabbed, but, backing against the wall, makes him stop for a discussion of terms. All the way along the Via del Tritone, these walls are lined with soldiers, who have been watching the parade every evening so that they have got to know the regular girls, and are fishing for the better ones, with whom they will attempt to drive bargains. If a respectable woman goes through here and hurries on without replying to greetings, she is likely to be followed by such jeers as, ‘She must be a hundred-thousand-lire broad!’

The hotels in the Via Veneto that have been commandeered by the A.C. are picketed by tarts and pimps. The Air Corps are great spenders on furlough and they are allowed to have women in their rooms, so that the aviators’ hotel in this section is the centre of activity and gaiety. Women stream through the lobby, perch in the bar, and flutter about the entrance like starlings. I saw one little girl coming out, wild-looking, red-haired and slim, who gave me the impression that she was having an intoxicatingly good time as well as making a great deal of money. In another of these

hotels, one night, some soldiers threw a girl out of the window and broke her back so that she died. Such incidents have antagonized the Italians, and the 'better class' of people are disgusted by the spectacle of the Roman women—and many who have come into Rome for the purpose—making such a display of themselves, and by seeing what was once one of the handsomest and most fashionable quarters of modern Rome turned into a squalid market, where the behaviour of Catullus' Lesbia '*in quadriuiis et angiportis*'—which I have never seen in public before—is a matter of nightly occurrence. There is a sign on an American Army club which says, 'Reserved for G.I.s and Their Lady Guests', and the Romans have picked up the latter phrase as a synonym for tarts. They say that the word *signorina*, from its constant use by the soldiers, has passed into disrepute.

In these days it is always reassuring to find people who have been working at the arts undistracted by war-work and unshaken in morale. One of the things I have enjoyed most in Rome has been calling, from time to time, on Leonor Fini, the painter. I had seen in New York a few of her pictures, which were half-surrealist, half-romantic; and to climb up to her apartment in an enormous old palace in the squalid Piazza Jesù was to realize that Rome itself was not only intensely romantic but even also rather surrealist, so that such work loses the power to shock that was its aim and its pride in Paris. At night, with electricity economized, the place is entirely dark, and at first, among the many entrances that open on all sides of the courtyard, I would always become confused and have to summon the *portière*. You need matches to achieve the ascent of the shallow and wide and deep interminable marble stairs, made for unimaginable grandeur, that the proportionately lofty arched windows illuminate only faintly; and by the glimmer, beneath the stone vaults and among the great funeral vases and the flower-carved entablatures, one has glimpses of Roman relics that appear, on their heroic scale, in a completely surrealist key: the conventionally statuesque pose of a white naked hero with a sword would be followed by a similar figure in an unexpected half-squatting posture; a single finger from an ancient colossus, standing on a pedestal upright, loomed as tall as an ordinary statue; and a bearded man, seated on something and leaning forward intent on a book, had the appearance of reading in the

toilet. As the staircase goes on so long that you finally lose count of the landings, you are likely to try wrong apartments and get the rooms of some lurking nobleman whose old butler peers out through the crack of a door apprehensively secured by a chain.

At last, taking a smaller stairway, you arrive, just under the roof, at what must once have been servants' quarters but is now a duplex apartment. One comfortable large room serves as both studio and living room and looks out, in a commanding view, as I discovered on later visits, over the infinite lines and planes of the roofs and top-storeys of Rome, all grey-blues and dry pale buffs, which are matched, during the late summer sunsets, by the pale blues and pinks of the sky, in which the eternal swifts restlessly twitter and flock. The mood induced by the stairway and by my previous experience of surrealists was so strong that when I went there first I mistook for a 'surrealist object' a large cat with a bandage on its head that was lying on the table like an ornament but that turned out to be alive when I tried to pick it up. And, as a matter of fact, the studio is remarkably and refreshingly free from what Signorina Fini, in speaking of another painter, once called the *voulu* aspect of surrealism. Such 'objects' as one did find about were mostly things she had used as models, such as a small glass case of moths; and the place, with its disorderly elegance, was quite free from the neo-Gothicism that one associates with, for example, Max Ernst. The pictures by Leonor Fini and her colleagues on the walls and tables and shelves had an element of fairy-tale enchantment and *commedia dell'arte* humour that prevented their being 'modern' in the sense of Dali and Ernst; and, in Rome, it seemed perfectly natural to pass to Signorina Fini's paintings from the late Renaissance patterns, the decorated ceilings and panels that make a background in the Vatican Museum: hippogriffs that hang in a filigree of scrollery, vine-leaves and tendrils, winged sphinxes with the curling rears of seahorses, spindle-legged and needle-billed birds, hawk-beaked and double-headed eagles, feathery-tongued serpents with twining tails, cupids holding red spidery lobsters, allegorical figures of Graces that seem balancing like tight-rope walkers; and the satyrs' masks, the lions' faces, the unidentifiable female beings all compact of imperturbable complacencies. It was as if into this mythical world, conventionalized and quietly lively, Leonor Fini had brought an emotion more personal and more poetic, and *motifs* from a later

time. Here the sphinxes are leonine and immobilized in their first sombre broodings or the maiden surprises of girlhood—a girlhood cut off from the world and queerly turned in on itself; here great ladies with dishevelled long hair and long enveloping skirts sit silent and self-absorbed in the grand but bare rooms of palaces, from the walls or arches of which big fragments have sometimes fallen; and a tousle-headed dubious-eyed girl with a pretty throat and full round breasts has flowered from a twisted root that sends out fibres and bulbous sprouts, among a petrified beetle, a death's-head moth, two white paper animal skulls, and a dead lizard with its pale belly up. These contrasts of brokenness and deadness with a warm and rich physical life that is unable to extricate itself are characteristic of Signorina Fini's painting; they seem to express a tragic paradox. This is a soul that is sullenly and fiercely and yet wistfully narcissistic, self-admiring and self-consuming, at once blooming and checked in growth. She is entirely a *female* artist occupied much less with the *work*, which the man will approach as a craft but which in her case is unequal in skill and taste, than with her dreams, her awareness of herself, her personality and role as a woman. And for this reason her pictures of men are the weakest part of her work. With women she sometimes succeeds through assimilating them to herself; but her portraits of men that I have seen are invariably sentimental: mere images that rise in the mind of the smouldering sequestered girl who waits too long in the other pictures.

In one corner, beside her own work, hangs that of the Marquese Lepri, a young man in the Foreign Office, whom Signorina Fini first met in the early years of the war, when he was consul at Monte Carlo and who, more or less under her tutelage, has recently learned to paint. These examples of his painting show that he has been making a rapid development: some of the latest ones seem to me extremely good. Satirical and fantastic, they do not exploit any of the anomalies which are the tricks of the surrealist school, but attach themselves to a tradition that is Italian, almost medieval. I told him this as I was looking at a picture—done recently and one of the best—in which a party of sodden people in contemporary evening dress are seen gorging at a dinner table that stretches back in a long perspective, while the walls and the floor and the table itself are cracking up below and about them—all painted with the precision and clearness of a loggia

in some early religious scene; and he replied that he had hoped he had got into it 'a certain actuality, too'. On a table stood some drawings by Clerici: a young architect and classical draughtsman who has emerged from months of hiding in Florence to apply his firm and hollow line to violins spilling human intestines and bald indignant wigmaker's dummies.

I did not find at first in Signorina Fini any outward traits that corresponded to the elements of moroseness and frustration that often appeared in her work, nor in Lepri any disgust with the society breaking up around him. Leonor Fini is a handsome and voluptuous, an extraordinarily attractive woman—with large dark round eyes and abundant dark hair, which she arranges in a style that is copied from the ladies in Venetian paintings: gathered up and tied with a ribbon behind, but with a mass of it pushed forward on her forehead; and though she has lived in Paris for years, she seems always, not Parisian in dress, but magnificently and generously Italian. She was wearing, the first time I saw her, with a pair of very high-heeled sandals, an emerald-green taffeta housecoat with a kind of white lace filigree bodice. She is quite natural and talks very well—with perfect freedom and ease—about people and pictures and books, too sure of her personal taste, too intent on her own painting, ever to have been involved in that sectarian *esprit de corps*, that ardour for group promotion, that has infected some of the male surrealists. Lepri, in his white summer clothes, is quiet and cool and modest with, I thought, the indifference to current events and the sceptical lack of zeal that are supposed to be typical of Romans of the cultivated upper class. I liked to see them, and they were always most amiable, and I would sit turning over the pages of Max Ernst's demonological *collages* of old steel-engraving illustrations from nineteenth-century novels or of bestiaries of curious woodcuts showing animals with human heads. It seemed to me that here was a centre of real creative life in Rome, a live spirit that had not been extinguished.

It was, then, with rather a shock that I discovered one day that their dearest hope was to get to the United States before the summer was over. 'You don't like Rome, do you?' Signorina Fini had suddenly said to me. I confessed, feeling impolite, that I did not like it much. But, 'I don't like it,' she told me. 'I hate it!' She wanted to go to America and live in the country there. She

had made a brief visit to the States, and she felt that she could find there the freedom she needed—she described herself, I think, as ‘*sauvage*’—and that she implied was impossible in Europe. Her position, as I knew, is, like Silone’s, not that of a great figure in Italy. She suffers, like him, from the handicap of having made a reputation abroad while many Italian writers and artists were taking the wage of the Fascists or submitting to the Fascist directives; and, returning, the exiles are met with a mixture of envious malice and of the uncomprehending hostility of a conventional and antiquated culture, condemned also to provinciality by the restrictions of Mussolini. As for Lepri, though a loyal civil servant, he cannot, I suppose, look forward to much of a career in a government that seems likely to remain under the thumb of a foreign power or, if it escapes this, to go to the Left at a rate that he could scarcely follow. They are not at home, not serene—probably almost as uncomfortable as I am. The sullen women in the empty palaces, the swinish crew in the banquet hall, are the realities with which they are living.

This is a period that is hard to accept; we have it with us but we do not really believe in it. One day Signorina Fini showed me a copy of *Vogue* which she had just received from America and expressed an amused astonishment at an article on Buchenwald, with photographs of tangled corpses and bodies hung up on hooks which had been printed between photographs of fashions and writings on frivolous subjects, and which ran over into the back pages where it was flanked by cosmetics ads. This was embarrassing to me as an American, but her instinctive reaction to it was not itself, I thought, without a certain incongruity, for she had just been engaged in executing, with a good deal of finesse and elegance, a series of pen-and-ink drawings for the *Juliette* of the Marquis de Sade: dim figures of men and women hacking one another to pieces and performing other questionable acts. The surrealists had cultivated deliberately a sadism of the parlour and the gallery; but now the times had overtaken and passed them in a manner so overwhelming that it was impossible for Leonor Fini not to be shocked by the impropriety of juxtaposing these starving and cannibalistic victims, these wholesale incinerations of sometimes still-living human beings, with the refinements of Fifth Avenue and the Rue de la Paix. The surrealist exponent of such horrors who makes out of them objects of art

that the lover of art will enjoy, with a shudder of pleasure or pain, cannot help being startled at finding them served up as if they were detective thrillers or merely a whet to the appetite in the enjoyment of articles of luxury.

My hotel, the Hôtel de la Ville, is at the top of the Via Sistina, and almost directly opposite, at the conjunction of two streets, stands a curious flatiron-shaped house in which D'Annunzio lived and to which, in the luscious eighties, the *femmes du monde* of *Il Piacere* are supposed, with faltering or eager steps, to have come to their rendezvous. A little farther down the Via Sistina is the house where Gogol wrote *Dead Souls*, designated now by a plaque with an inscription in Italian and Russian that has been put up by the Russian colony; in the next street, the Via Gregoriana, is a house in which Stendhal lived when he was making his *Promenades dans Rome* and which a couple of centuries earlier had been occupied by Salvator Rosa; and in a building just below, at the foot of the Spanish steps, is the room in which Keats died and which has been kept as a Keats museum. Not far away are the houses where Scott and Bernini and Goethe lived.

Now, at first I found myself rather stimulated by the thought of these illustrious neighbours—especially since it seemed an environment, this region around the Piazza di Spagna, where men had really lived and worked, not merely a Bohemian quarter where talent went soft or ran thin. But the longer I have stayed in Rome, the more the cultural accretions of its past have come to weigh on me and affect me as cloying. The climax of this feeling was a visit I paid to the celebrated Caffè Greco, which I had been told I ought to explore. Though it went back to 1760 and had been frequented by no end of great people, I could not like the Caffè Greco. Making a plunge through those sordid rope curtains that I always find distasteful in Rome, I threaded my way through three dingy compartments which were narrow, inadequately lighted and lined with little black horsehair seats forbiddingly and uncomfortably squeezed in behind little grey-veined marble tables. On the walls hung bad portraits and landscapes and not very impressive medallions of famous men who had come to the place. One of the ridiculous little hallway-like rooms that should all have been thrown into a single one was lit only by a dismal filtration from the dirty grey panes of the

skylight. The waiter prides himself on his languages and has a humorous-familiar tinge, as if he were playing a role in some comedy of the eighteen-forties. He will show you the yellow old albums in which the great men have signed their names if your interest is sufficiently keen and you back it with the hint of a tip. And you can pick up a little leaflet with descriptions of the place in four languages, each of which contains a list of names of celebrities of that nationality who had been habitués of the restaurant. I learned from this that the Caffè Greco had been visited by the following persons: Goldoni, Canova, Leopardi, Carducci, D'Annunzio, Stendhal, Berlioz, Corot, Gounod, Bizet, Baudelaire, Paul Bourget, Anatole France, Byron, Shelley, Keats, Thackeray, Goethe, Schopenhauer, Mendelssohn, Liszt, Wagner, King Ludwig of Bavaria, Gogol, Thorwaldsen and Mark Twain—as well as by many others only less famous.

But all these names and associations were too much for me to take in at once, and my effort to react to them appropriately had upon me the effect of an emetic and compelled me to disgorge, as it were, all the lore that I had already swallowed of the genius-haunted past of Rome. For the moment my only thought was that the Greco was chill, cramped and fusty, that it had no more relation to those artists than the leather of their old boots, and that a more modern and more cheerful café should be installed in that place instead.

I started, before I left Rome, Hawthorne's *The Marble Faun*, which I had never read before, and I was amazed to find how close his reflections—mostly transferred, I believe, from his notebooks—had run to the kind of thing that I was putting down in my own. When I finally left the city, I was feeling, very much as he was, decidedly 'tired of the sight of those immense seven-storied, yellow-washed hovels, or call them palaces, where all that is dreary in domestic life seems magnified and multiplied, and weary of climbing those staircases, which ascend from a ground floor of cook-shops, cobblers' stalls, stables, and regiments of cavalry, to a middle region of princes, cardinals, and ambassadors, and an upper tier of artists, just beneath the unattainable sky [a description which still more or less fitted such places as the Palazzo Altieri, where Leonor Fini lived] . . . disgusted with the pretence of holiness and the reality of nastiness, each equally

omnipresent . . . half lifeless from the languid atmosphere, the vital principle of which has been used up long ago, or corrupted by myriads of slaughters . . . crushed down in spirit with the desolation of her [Rome's] ruin, and the hopelessness of her future . . . in short, hating her with all our might and adding our individual curse to the infinite anathema which her old crimes have unmistakably brought down.' It is true that I was also to feel—although not until a year or so later, when I was back in the United States—the nostalgia of which he speaks when he writes that, after leaving Rome 'in such mood as this, we are astonished by the discovery, by and by, that our heart-strings have mysteriously attached themselves to the Eternal City, and are drawing us thitherward again.' But, in the meantime, I was in a position to recognize the perfect accuracy of Hawthorne's description of the effect of modern Rome on a Protestant Anglo-Saxon.

Later on, when I was back at home, I read Norman Douglas's *South Wind*, also for the first time. It seemed to me that this famous novel had been very much overrated—for though it is clever and fairly well written, it is really, it seems to me, hardly more than a superior piece of journalism about the life of the foreign colony in Capri. Douglas is up to a point successful in dealing with a subject very similar to that of Hawthorne in *The Marble Faun*: the influence on an Anglican bishop of the demoralizing atmosphere of Italy. But if one reads the two books side by side, one is made very clearly aware of the relative superficiality of the later writer's treatment of the theme. The contrast is inescapable because—what I have never seen noted—Norman Douglas has reproduced the central incident of Hawthorne's book and used it in just the same way to create a moral problem. The parallel is so complete that one assumes it to have been the result of some trick of unconscious memory, reviving the impression of a book which has been read and forgotten in youth. Thus, in Hawthorne we have a woman, American but perhaps with some non-English blood, constantly pursued and plagued by a rascally discarded husband who is in a position to threaten her with 'blasting' her reputation. The moral crux of the book is the scene on the Capitoline Hill, in which she consentingly stands by while an Italian who wants to protect her pushes him over a cliff and kills him. In *South Wind*, an Englishwoman is similarly pursued and

blackmailed by an undesirable husband, and the moral situation is managed by having her push him over a cliff in Capri, where she has lived for so long that she has presumably caught what the author has already shown to be the local point of view on revenge and the taking of human life. In either case, the problem presented is how shall the crime be treated, not only by the persons responsible, but also by those, New England or English, who happen to know about it, and the conclusion is, in either case, that the languor and animality of Italy are capable of dulling the conscience to a degree at which such an act does not seem so clearly wrong as it would in another country.

But the difference—a curious one—is that Douglas, the man of the world, who has now been accepted for thirty years (since the appearance of *South Wind*) as the touchstone of sophistication, should have made the whole thing too simple: a matter of black and white, with the two colours simply interchanged. The Scotch moralist in Douglas has always interfered with the epicurean Austrian (to assign, perhaps rashly, his mixed tendencies to the elements of his mixed blood), so that he cannot enjoy the pleasures which he makes it his business to celebrate without betraying, at the same time, a need to justify his self-indulgence by bringing charges of inhuman or anti-social behaviour against people with sterner principles. But a hedonist should not be peevish; and Douglas's doctrine of sybaritic Nietzscheanism, at once too soft and too cruel to catch the real exhilaration of Nietzsche, suffers also from the handicap, in a Nietzschean fatal, of being nagged by a bad conscience. In *South Wind*, the point he would like to make is that the sun of Southern Italy puts the morality of the North to sleep and may lead us to regard as quite natural, perhaps even to approve as beneficent, actions that we should elsewhere condemn. But what it turns out that he cannot help doing is so to construct his fable that the killing by the woman of her husband becomes a positive moral act, which her brother the Bishop and the reader must endorse as, not merely understandable, but as demonstrably, undeniably *right*—so that, instead of remaining a comedy or suggesting a psychological inquiry, the book ends as a melodrama, with the lady as surely a heroine as if she had killed to defend her honour. In real life, a woman who had done such a thing would certainly have had some qualms, and her brother would have at least been uncomfortable and his relations with his

sister affected: the story would be only half told; and Hawthorne shows his insight and intelligence, his superior toughness of logic, by giving Miriam a complex character which makes her behaviour plausible as well as a great deal more interesting (Douglas's lady is all of a piece), and even partly redeeming the husband, who is less a Victorian demon than an unhappy and desperate *détraqué* (where Douglas's husband is simply a rotter); by having his Italian murderer driven finally to a Catholic repentance for his pagan Italian crime; and by presenting the painful embarrassment caused by both parties involved in the crime to their well-meaning American friends. It is here the provincial puritan, the grumpy American traveller, who complained about the emptiness of Italian museums and the shallowness of Italian painting and who wanted the nude statues clothed, who is the genuine man of the world where the cities of the soul are in question, and who knows that Anglo-Saxon and Italian share, after all, the same mixed nature.

Yet *South Wind* may be read with *The Marble Faun* as one of the best accounts ever attempted of the peculiar and, to the Anglo-Saxon, dismaying alteration in one's point of view that may result from a long sojourn in Italy.

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NOVELIST-PHILOSOPHERS-XI
STENDHAL—II

IV

‘LA CHARTREUSE DE PARME’

‘POLITICS in a work of literature’, wrote Stendhal in *la Chartreuse de Parme*, ‘is like a pistol-shot at a concert. It is something crude from which it is nevertheless impossible to withhold our attention.’

Stendhal’s use of the word ‘politics’ is not altogether free from ambiguity. If he meant that the discussion of political theories or a realistic account of the immediate political scene damages a novel, he was certainly right, and *Lucien Leuwen* is there to illustrate the point. The novel, however, must be able to deal with any form of experience; the deciding factor is the way in which ‘politics’ is presented.

All Stendhal’s novels are criticisms of the social-political scene as he knew it, but he criticized it in different ways and at different levels. There is a certain amount of direct comment, but as a rule he preferred the indirect approach. In his first novel, *Armance*, Octave de Malivert’s sexual impotence is a symbol of the impotence of the ruling class. The book is a failure because the principal character will not bear the weight of the symbolism attached to him, and simply strikes the reader as a Romantic outcast who belongs to the same family as René and Obermann. The method used in Stendhal’s two greatest novels, however, is a development of the one employed in *Armance*. In *le Rouge et le Noir*, a peasant brooding over *le Mémorial de Sainte-Hélène* in a remote corner of France suggests an embattled Europe and the distant tramp of marching armies. An angry father knocks the book into the mill stream and the plop, as it strikes the water, is the faint echo of a falling empire and of a head falling on the guillotine. A citadel soaring above a miniature State marks the change from war to diplomacy, evokes the Europe of the Holy Alliance, and of a peace which is founded on the ruins of a liberalism whose representatives languish in the dungeons of the stately edifice.

D

Stendhal's use of a tiny stage, which shows only a small corner of society, has immense advantages. It enables him to study the individual character with minute care and, at the same time, to reveal the significance of a drama which is being played out on a huge stage, to evoke the whole of contemporary Europe. It was the method used by Shakespeare in *Antony and Cleopatra*, where we are aware of a vast empire stretching out behind the characters who are the actors, not in some small domestic tragedy, but in a world-drama and hold the fate of empires in their hands. I do not think that it is unduly fanciful to see resemblances between Shakespeare's Egypt and Stendhal's Parma which gives the same impression of vastness and depth that he so much admired in the sixteenth century.

La Chartreuse de Parme is not simply a political novel; it is one of the greatest of all political novels because the author was triumphantly successful in dissolving his politics into his novel. He approached his material with a greater degree of detachment than in any of his previous books, and his criticism is far more subtle. He turned his back on the French political game and created an imaginary state where, by a process of selection and rearrangement, he was able to ridicule all the current political attitudes and slogans. The care with which the characters are subordinated to the main plan gives the book its symmetry. Not the least impressive thing about his Parma is its *compactness*. We have the impression that we are looking at the world in a microcosm; the Europe of the 1830s is reflected in the constantly changing colours of a bubble.

It is a brilliantly comic presentation of a miniature police State with its ridiculous, nervous dictator, his astute prime minister, the monstrous minister of justice, the time-serving governor of the Citadel haunted by nightmares of escaping prisoners, the brilliant Duchess, the timid archbishop, the heir-apparent who cares only for mineralogy, the reactionary marquis professing 'une haine vigoureuse pour les lumières', and the sinister chorus with their grotesque names—Gonzo, Barbone, Grillo and Giletti. We see, too, the whole hierarchy of the duchy: the prince, the nobility, the courtiers, the bourgeois and the *peuple*, and their intricate relations with one another.

Stendhal's presentation of party politics provides an amusing comment on his time. Parma is divided between Ultras and

Liberals who are engaged in incredible intrigues and fratricidal strife. Yet it is clear that a change of government would simply mean a change of personalities, and would be nothing more than a change 'inside the whale'. The Liberals pay lip-service to freedom, but it is difficult to see any difference between their policy and the policy of the Ultras who are in power. The only effective 'liberal' is a political outlaw who plies his trade as a highway robber—carefully keeping a note of the sums he 'borrows' from the rich—and who assassinates the prince and disappears discreetly into exile after an abortive revolution. The official head of the Liberal party is the governor of the Citadel; but the Citadel is full of Liberals who are imprisoned in cages which are too small for them to stand upright or even to lie down in comfort, and which are the invention of the Liberal governor who purchases in this way a weekly audience with his sovereign. When they learn that their tormentor has recovered from a supposed attempt to poison him, the prisoners subscribe to have a *Te Deum* sung in the chapel. Such is the weakness of human nature, remarks the novelist.

The details are filled in with a series of effortless touches. They float up to us, casually, in snatches of conversation overheard among the different characters:

'... Parme . . . ce pays des mesures secrètes [où] tout ce qui n'est pas noble ou dévot est en prison, ou fait ses paquets pour y entrer.'

'... ce fameux prince de Parme, Ernest IV, si célèbre par ses sévérités, que les libéraux de Milan appelaient des cruautés.'

'Or, entre autres idées enfantines, le prince prétend avoir un ministère *moral*.'

When Mosca shoots down sixty odd people in the crowd who try to attack the statue of the prince in the uprising which follows his assassination, he writes to his mistress:

'Ils se portent fort bien, seulement ils sont en voyage. Le comte Zurla, ministre de l'intérieur, est allé lui-même à la demeure de chacun de ces héros malheureux, et a remis quinze sequins à leurs familles ou à leurs amis, avec ordre de dire que le défunt était en voyage, et menace très expresse de la prison, si l'on s'avisait de faire entendre qu'il avait été tué.'

Stendhal does not spare the values by which his characters live. 'Remarquez', says Mosca to the Duchess, when they are discussing Fabrice's career,

‘... que je ne prétends pas faire de Fabrice un prêtre exemplaire comme vous en voyez tant. Non; c’est un grand seigneur avant tout; il pourra rester parfaitement ignorant si bon lui semble, et n’en deviendra pas moins évêque et archevêque, si le prince continue à me regarder comme un homme utile.’

‘Crois ou ne crois pas à ce qu’on t’enseignera,’ says the Duchess to Fabrice, ‘*mais ne fais jamais aucune objection*. Figure-toi qu’on t’enseigne les règles du jeu de whist. . . .’

When Fabrice is imprisoned for killing Giletti, everyone takes it for granted that he is guilty, but

‘Qu’importe, après tout, qu’un homme de la naissance de Fabrice soit plus ou moins accusé d’avoir tué lui-même, et l’épée au poing, un histrion tel que Giletti.’

The novel opens with the arrival of Napoleon’s armies in Italy, and a picture of contemporary Italy unfolds before us like a panorama:

‘Le 15 mai 1796, le général Bonaparte fit son entrée dans Milan à la tête de cette jeune armée qui venait de passer le pont de Lodi, et d’apprendre au monde qu’après tant de siècles César et Alexandre avaient un successeur.’

One critic has suggested that the first five chapters are a mock-heroic introduction, but this seems to me to be a simplification. The novel derives its admirable poise from the constant variation of tone, and it is only by studying the tone of almost every sentence in the first chapter that we see how the book as a whole must be read. What is striking in this sentence is the mixture of levity and seriousness. Stendhal never lost his youthful admiration for Napoleon, but Napoleon’s irruption into Italy is nevertheless the first episode in what is essentially a great comic novel. The attitude which informs his work is very different from that of the other great nineteenth-century novelists. *La Chartreuse de Parme* is a study of tragic individuals who find themselves in comic situations, and this explains the mixture of levity and seriousness.

‘Les miracles de hardiesse et de génie [he goes on] dont l’Italie fut témoin en quelques mois réveillèrent un peuple endormi. . . . Au moyen âge, les Milanais étaient braves comme les Français de la révolution, et méritèrent de voir leur ville entièrement rasée par les empereurs de l’Allemagne. Depuis qu’ils étaient devenus de *fidèles sujets*, leur grande affaire était d’imprimer des sonnets sur

de petits mouchoirs de taffetas rose quand arrivait le mariage d'une jeune fille appartenant à quelque famille noble ou riche. . . . Il y avait loin de ces mœurs efféminées aux émotions profondes que donna l'arrivée imprévue de l'armée française.'

In this first chapter Stendhal is continually switching from positive to negative, from images of vitality to images of exhaustion and collapse. There is genuine feeling in his references to the heroic exploits of the French, and in the contrast between the Milanese of the Middle Ages and their successors in the eighteenth century. The arrival of the French appealed enormously to the martial Stendhal and provided the shock which set in motion the passions—the serious passions—that he studies in the comic setting. The *mouchoirs de taffetas rose* stand for the triviality of the Milanese and are an allusion to the miniature despotism. For the novel sometimes reminds one of a story told in coloured pictures on a handkerchief.

In a suggestive comment, Mr. Levin compares *la Chartreuse de Parme* to a comic opera, and points out that the dialogue between Fabrice and Clélia in the Citadel is 'recitative' and the reading of La Fontaine's Fable towards the end of the book a 'trio'. The analogy is a just one, but the book is far more carefully orchestrated than he perhaps allows. The operatic motif runs all through it. It can be seen in the constant repetition of comments and scraps of gossip in which the characters echo one another's thoughts and words. Two of the most impressive examples are the scene between the Duchess and Ludovic before the opening of the reservoirs and the great *scène de jalousie* where the 'recitative' is transported inside Mosca's mind:

' . . . elle l'aime comme un fils depuis quinze ans. Là gît tout mon espoir: *comme un fils* . . . mais elle a cessé de le voir depuis sa fuite pour Waterloo; mais en revenant de Naples, surtout pour elle, c'est un autre homme. *Un autre homme!* répéta-t-il avec rage, et cet homme est charmant. . . . '

The repetition reminds us of Molière's repetition of the words, *Le pauvre homme!* and *Sans dot!* in two famous scenes from *Tartuffe* and *l'Avare*; but the Count's obsession is nearer to tragedy than to comedy. The effect is heightened by the dumb show which follows:

'Il devenait fou; il lui sembla qu'en se penchant ils se donnaient

des baisers, là, sous ses yeux. Cela est impossible en ma présence, se dit-il; ma raison s'égare.'

When Stendhal writes:

'Ces soldats français riaient et chantaient toute la journée . . .'
and goes on to describe their efforts to learn the Italian dances, we can see that the opening chapter is also the opening scene of a comic opera with an immense chorus singing and dancing; but in the description of Napoleon's second entry into Milan after Marengo, the chorus suddenly changes into a *danse macabre*:

'Leurs figures pâles, leurs grands yeux étonnés, leurs membres amaigris, faisaient un étrange contraste avec la joie qui éclatait de toutes parts.'

In another place he strikes a burlesque note:

'En 1796, l'armée milanaise se composait de vingt-quatre faquins habillés de rouge, lesquels gardaient la ville de concert avec quatre magnifiques régiments hongrois. La licence des mœurs était extrême, mais les passions fort rares.'

The 'vingt-quatre faquins habillés de rouge' who, incongruously, form the front line defence of a great city are not, as they at first appear, comic opera soldiers. They are painted wooden soldiers, marionettes who might have come from an animated cartoon, marching jerkily up and down. There is a serious intention behind the parody. The 'four magnificent Hungarian regiments' are the symbol of an effete order—an order that is hollow and empty like the wooden soldiers—and the absence of passion is a sign of decadence. For in this book Stendhal sees life simultaneously under two aspects; he is at pains to emphasize the contrast between the elegant exterior and the inner moral decay, and the theme recurs all through the novel.

The dummy soldiers are followed at once by another sort of dummy—a dummy 'dictator'. 'The Archduke,' we are told, 'who lived at Milan, and governed in the name of the Emperor, had the lucrative idea of entering the grain trade. In consequence, the peasants were forbidden to sell their corn until his Highness's granaries were full.' A young painter of miniatures, named Gros, arrives with the armies and hears the story. While sitting in a café, he does a cartoon of a fat archduke being bayoneted by a French soldier:

'... au lieu de sang, il en sortait une quantité de blé incroyable.

La chose nommée plaisanterie ou caricature n'était pas connue en ce pays de despotisme cauteleux.'

The heroic monarchs of the past have been replaced by the petty dictator who is engaged in bourgeois commerce. The word 'miniature' reminds us that the despot is a miniature despot. For the effectiveness of Stendhal's criticism depends very largely on the fact that the *political* figures, but not the other characters in the book, are slightly less than life size. In the caricature the fat archduke becomes a completely burlesque figure with grain pouring out of his belly, but the absence of 'blood' also emphasizes his inhumanity and his corruption. The last sentence but one draws attention to the humourlessness—the dangerous humourlessness—of the tyrant. The cartoonist, too, has a special significance. He has struck the first blow at despotism, and laughter, which is unknown in his domains, is a more serious threat to his position than the bayonet which pricks the bubble. The passage looks forward to the strange figure of Ferrante Palla. For it is another 'artist'—a poet this time—who under the guidance of the duchess will explode the despotism from within.

The caricature of the archduke reminds us of a crude portrait of a clown on the hoardings outside a music hall, and it prepares us for the 'personal appearance' of Ranuce-Ernest IV. We meet him in his study dressed not in uniform, but in the frock coat of a citizen-king. Over his desk hangs a portrait of Louis XIV—the despot on the grand scale—which provides the proper comment on his antics:

'Évidemment, il cherchait le regard et la parole noble de Louis XIV, et il s'appuyait sur la table de *Scagliola*, de façon à se donner la tournure de Joseph II. . . . La duchesse trouva qu'en de certains moments l'imitation de Louis XIV était un peu trop marquée chez le prince; par exemple, dans sa façon de sourire avec bonté tout en renversant la tête.'

Stendhal's irony is a process of inflation and deflation. His pompous little dictator swells with pride and importance as he struts up and down his study, but all the time he is wondering what people are saying about him and whether they are laughing at him. Then, suddenly, we overhear the damaging story which is recounted with polite laughter behind locked doors and which makes the prince a figure of fun to his loyal subjects:

'Mais dans un moment d'ennui et de colère, et un peu pour

imiter Louis XIV. . . . Ernest IV a fait pendre un jour deux libéraux. . . . Croiriez-vous que le prince regarde sous les lits de son appartement avant de se coucher, et dépense un million . . . pour avoir une bonne police, et vous voyez devant vous, madame la duchesse, le chef de cette terrible police.'

The scene between the duchess and Ludovic which precedes the prince's death is, as I have already suggested, one of the most effective examples of Stendhal's use of the operatic motif. She is giving her retainer instructions to open the reservoir, which is the signal to Ferrante Palla to kill the prince, and also to provide wine for the tenants of her estate at Sacca:

'Enfin, reprit la duchesse d'un air singulièrement dégagé, si je donne du vin à mes braves gens de Sacca, je veux inonder les habitants de Parme; le même soir où mon château sera illuminé, prends le meilleur cheval de mon écurie, cours à mon palais, à Parme, et ouvre le réservoir.

'—Ah! l'excellente idée qu'a madame! s'écria Ludovic, riant comme un fou; du vin aux braves gens de Sacca, de l'eau aux bourgeois de Parme, qui étaient si sûrs, les misérables, que monsignor Fabrice allait être empoisonné comme le pauvre L. . . .

'La joie de Ludovic n'en finissait point; la duchesse regardait avec complaisance ses rires fous; il répétait sans cesse: Du vin aux gens de Sacca, et de l'eau à ceux de Parme. . . .

'—Et de l'eau aux gens de Parme, répliqua la duchesse en riant. . . .

'—*Et de l'eau pour les gens de Parme!* reprit la duchesse en chantant. Comment exécutera-tu cette plaisanterie?

'—Mon plan est tout fait . . . à onze heures je suis dans ma chambre au palais; et à onze heures un quart de l'eau pour les gens de Parme.'

Stendhal strikes a new note here. The gaiety, the décors and the chorus belong to comic opera, but they are the heralds of murder; the servant riding towards the palace to open the reservoir is a character not from comic but from grand opera, who is deliberately reduced to the proportions of a figure from musical comedy. The macabre comedy is heightened by the innocent reference—Ludovic knows nothing of the significance of the opening of the reservoir—to the attempts to poison Fabrice in the Citadel, and by the contrast between wine and water. The drinking of wine by the *gens de Sacca* is transformed into a comic

funeral celebration; and water, which is normally a symbol of purity, has a double meaning here. It is the signal for the administration of its opposite—poison—but, ironically, poison is the ‘water’ which cleanses Parma of the despot.

‘Vous déplairez toujours aux hommes: vous avez trop de feu pour les âmes prosaïques,’ observes the Duchess to Fabrice, recalling the Abbé Pirard’s words to Julien and reminding us of the connection between all Stendhal’s novels. ‘The central problem’, writes Mr. Josephson, ‘is always the same: the education of a youth for life; the formation of his mind and character under the blows of experience; his debut in society.’¹ *Le Rouge et le Noir* and *la Chartreuse de Parme* are complementary studies and must be seen in relation to one another. In spite of their difference of birth and fortune, Julien and Fabrice are not opposites; they are brothers. Julien is socially a *parvenu* and psychologically an ‘outsider’; Fabrice is socially an aristocrat and psychologically as much of an outsider as Julien. He wrestles with the same emotional problems, subjects himself to the same self-scrutiny, and swings as violently from one extreme to another.²

In *la Chartreuse de Parme* Stendhal set out to explore the problem of the ‘outsider’ in an aristocratic society. Fabrice is the born courtier who, far from being a ‘have not’ like Julien, possesses all the advantages—birth, wealth, intelligence, good looks and influence—which should have ensured him a triumphal career in Parma; but in spite of his apparent successes, his career ends as surely as Julien’s in disaster. The answer seems to be that, whatever his material advantages, the *étranger* always meets with the same fate. His problem is a psychological one which makes material considerations irrelevant.

Stendhal refers ironically to Fabrice as *notre héros*, but his attitude towards him is ambivalent, and the continual changes of tone recall Molière’s attitude towards his Misanthrope. One of the clearest indications of it occurs in the description of his hero’s

¹*Op. cit.*, pp. 391–2.

²In the remaining novels, Octave de Malivert’s ‘otherness’ is purely physical in origin; Lucien Leuwen is an upper middle-class ‘outsider’; Lamiel is a survivor not from the sixteenth century like Mathilde, but from the eighteenth century and has obvious affinities with Laclos’ Mme de Merteuil.

exploits at Waterloo, which is placed intentionally immediately after the account of the heroic exploits of Napoleon's armies in Italy. The description of the battle, as seen by a combatant, is one of Stendhal's greatest achievements. There is no staginess, no melodrama; the battle appears, as battles must to those taking part in them, incredibly confused. Fabrice's role is a mixed one. Stendhal clearly admires the courage and the spirit of adventure which take him to Belgium, but Fabrice also plays the part of the proverbial *blanc bec*. He scarcely knows which side he is fighting on, is incapable of loading his own musket, is made drunk by the *vivandières*, runs after the soldier he has shot like a child dashing to pick up its first rabbit; and when the battle is over, he is tormented by the problem of discovering whether he has really been at a battle at all. In spite of his mockery, however, there are moments when Stendhal regards his hero with something very like tenderness. He certainly preferred his aristocrat to his *parvenu*, and one has the impression that he never quite forgave Julien for being so 'lower class'. When, towards the end of the book, the new Prince of Parma writes to tell the Duchess that he has been 'in action' in the absurd uprising which followed his father's death, there is a reference back to Fabrice's adventures at Waterloo, but the laugh is not at Fabrice's expense.

Fabrice is in some ways a more complex character than Julien, and he has his roots in folk-lore. He plays a number of different parts, and the way in which they overlap, merge into one another, reflects the depth and richness of Stendhal's art. When he pursues la Fausta, disguised in an immense red wig, and ends by seducing her much more attractive maid, he is a parody of the Knight Errant; but this knight errant, who wears the purple stockings of a monsignor, is at the same time an ironical portrait of the eighteenth-century ecclesiastic. In other places he becomes the youthful hero of romance trying to win a bride who belongs to the world of fairy-tale.

His most curious part, however, is that of the young innocent who is almost unconscious of the events taking place about him in the outer world and of their significance. 'He had the faith,' we are told on several occasions; but it does not prevent him from committing simony or adultery, or from indulging in manœuvres which would have won the grudging admiration of Julien. It never even occurs to him that they are in any way

inconsistent with his profession. We are inclined to attribute his conduct to Stendhal's irony, but this view is only partly correct. Fabrice is to a greater extent than Julien a dual personality. His contacts with the life of his time are fewer, his withdrawal into another world more complete. The Fabrice who fights at Waterloo, who is in love with Clélia, and whose first movement in a tavern brawl 'fut tout à fait du xvi^e siècle' is the real Fabrice. The courtier who says 'all the right things' at his audience with the prince, the cleric who flatters the archbishop and several of his other roles are *personæ*. He is simply 'going through the motions', is constructing artificial bridges between himself and everyday life, but his real self is not engaged. That is why the deepest impression that he makes on us is one of innocence, of being uncontaminated by the world.

The character of Fabrice is rich in other symbols—symbols 'surging up . . . from the dark of the unconscious mind'.¹ When he prowls round the outside of the family castle, its 'walls' have the same significance as the 'walls' in *le Rouge et le Noir*. They are the barrier which separates the 'outsider' from the world in which he was born, and they stand for the tyranny of the father and brother whose betrayal has turned him into a fugitive from 'justice'.² The 'forests' and the 'lakes' where he wanders are both objective and subjective. They belong to the same inner world to which Julien withdraws after leaving Verrières. The 'forests' are the labyrinth in which the outsider struggles with his psychological conflicts, the 'lakes' are symbols of 'peace' and of the solutions which, tantalizingly, elude him. His meditation on his feelings for the Duchess introduces the incest motif, and his doubts about his capacity for love reveal the hidden fear of impotence which is associated with it and which dogged his creator all his life.³ One of the most remarkable symbols is the chestnut tree which Fabrice's mother had planted in his honour when he was a child, and which he decides to inspect before leaving the forests:

'En effet, au lieu de se retirer par la ligne la plus courte, et de

¹ Josephson, *op. cit.*, p. 429.

² This scene is probably an allusion to the fact that Fabrice was the illegitimate son of the Marquise del Dongo and the French officer billeted at her house in 1796 whom Fabrice sees, but does not recognize, at Waterloo.

³ It accounts for Stendhal's own preoccupation with *le fiasco* (temporary sexual impotence) in his autobiographical writings and in *de l'Amour*.

gagner les bords du lac Majeur, où sa barque l'attendait, il faisait un énorme détour pour aller voir *son arbre*. . . .¹ Il serait digne de mon frère, se dit-il, d'avoir fait couper cet arbre. . . . Deux heures plus tard son regard fut consterné; des méchants ou un orage avaient rompu l'une des principales branches du jeune arbre, qui pendait desséchée; Fabrice la coupa avec respect, à l'aide de son poignard, et tailla bien net la coupure, afin que l'eau ne pût pas s'introduire dans le tronc. Ensuite, quoique le temps fût bien précieux pour lui . . . il passa une bonne heure à bêcher la terre autour de l'arbre chéri. Toutes ces folies accomplies, il reprit rapidement la route du lac Majeur. Au total, il n'était point triste, l'arbre était d'une belle venue, plus vigoureux que jamais, et, en cinq ans, il avait presque doublé. La branche n'était qu'un accident sans conséquence; une fois coupée, elle ne nuisait plus à l'arbre, et même il serait plus élancé, sa membrure commençant plus haut.'

This passage, like the imaginary descent into the labyrinth in *Phèdre*, seems to me to be one of the very few passages in great literature where the Freudian symbols offer a complete explanation of the character's motives and where they contribute directly to the literary value of the writing. The 'tree' is a phallic symbol. *La ligne la plus courte* stands for Fabrice's temptation to leave the 'forests' without trying to solve his problems; but he resists it and the *énorme détour* is the struggle to reassure himself about his virility. The fear that his brother, whom he always associates with his tyrannical father, may have cut down the tree is his fear of castration. When he sees that one of the principal branches has in fact been broken and is hanging down, dry and withered—a grisly symbol of the severed member—he believes for a horrible moment that they have succeeded. Then, by one of those immense efforts of the will which are characteristic of Stendhal's heroes at their greatest moments, he proceeds to identify the dead branch with his enemies, and the tree, which becomes a symbol of 'life', with himself. This gives the passage its tension and its dramatic force. The pruning and tending of the tree is a ritual act. The lopping off of the dead branch stands for the death or castration of father and brother, which will prevent any further interference in his life, and it may also refer to his decision not to yield to his incestuous *inclination* for the Duchess. When he secures the tree against water filtering into the trunk and spends

¹Italic in the text.

an hour digging round it, he is carrying out a primitive fertility rite and protecting himself against the intrusion of corrosive elements which may undermine his virility. There is a feeling of great relief as he surveys his handiwork, observes the splendid foliage on the tree and realizes that his fears were groundless, that the dead branch, like his enemies, was only 'an accident of no consequence'. He turns with a clear conscience towards the 'lake' where the boat is waiting to carry him away from the 'forests' back to life in Parma.

Fabrice is flanked by the twin figures of Comte Mosca and the Duchess, and the relations between the three are vital to the pattern of the book. The Count and the Duchess are both people who, unlike Fabrice, are very firmly rooted in the society of their time, which makes them the opposite of the *étranger* type:

'En Espagne, sous le général Saint-Cyr [says the Count], j'affrontais des coups de fusil pour arriver à la croix, et ensuite à un peu de gloire; maintenant je m'habille comme un personnage de comédie pour gagner un grand état de maison et quelques milliers de francs.'

The Count's words are a frank admission that he has compromised with society and with the demands of the police State; he has abandoned a career of military glory to become a politician and the despot's pet—the irony of *un personnage de comédie* is not lost on us—preferring the chance of gaining 'a few thousand francs' to the *croix* which are awarded for 'valour'. It is the victory of *logique* over *espagnolisme*. The Count has become a *raisonneur* who sometimes reminds us of Molière's *honnêtes hommes*; and it is 'logic' which prompts him to make the fatal omission from a document which sends Fabrice to prison.

The Duchess is a magnificent creation. Her single-mindedness throws Fabrice's rootlessness into high relief; but she too has compromised. Although she is in a sense always 'in opposition', she plays the political game and uses the methods of the police State to revenge herself on the prince. Her victory remains a hollow one, and her incestuous passion for her nephew is never satisfied.

The Citadel of Parma dominates the novel, not merely because a large part of it is devoted to Fabrice's imprisonment there, but because of its symbolical importance. When Fabrice enters the Citadel, he stands at once for the sensitive individual, the

unpolitical man, who is caught in the toils of the police State, and for the youthful hero escaping from a world in which he has no part.

Stendhal is at pains to emphasize the size of the prison, carefully noting down a bewildering string of measurements. For its physical size dominates the State of Parma, towering above its absurd intrigues, as it dominates the novelist's imagination. There is a deliberate contrast between the immense size of the building with its spacious rooms and the tiny corridor, the narrow corkscrew staircase *en filigrane*, by which the prisoner reaches his cell. The walls 'ornés d'une quantité de têtes de morts en marbre blanc, de proportions colossales, élégamment sculptées et placées sur deux os en sautoir' transform the place into a fantastic charnel-house and are an allusion to the 'death-wish' which haunts Stendhal's characters. But this time Fabrice's reaction is a positive one:

'Voilà bien une invention de la haine qui ne peut tuer, se dit Fabrice, et quelle diable d'idée de me montrer cela!'

He knows that his time has not come, that he is passing through the chamber of death towards Clélia who stands for 'life'. The sombre décors are merely the sign of the petty despot's hold over his country. He hates and fears opposition; he spends a million on his secret police and large sums on spies; but at bottom his hatred is feeble. It cannot kill, or rather it cannot touch the *étranger* whose exploits have thrown the political machine out of gear.

Fabrice's ascent to his cell is not a 'social climb' like Julien's ascent to Mathilde's room. The devious winding staircases lead out of the devious winding intrigues of the Court. His 'cell' is a cage suspended in a room and only touches the wall on one side, apparently emphasizing his isolation and detachment. There seems to be a reference to the cages where Clélia keeps her birds, for Fabrice becomes much more her prisoner than the prince's. In abandoning the world he has also abandoned his ecclesiastical career which is part of the political game. His breviary is used only to record the progress of his love affair with Clélia; the prison chapel is a trysting place for the lovers. When he escapes, another chapel is the scene of the Duchess's oath to go to bed with the new prince on condition that Fabrice is 'acquitted' and the archbishopric thrown in.

Fabrice's arrival at the summit is accompanied by an immense

sense of release. He looks down on Parma and its intrigues (as he had looked down on the frivolous world from the Abbé Blanès' tower) and on the mountains which appeared to be a hundred leagues away:

'Ce ne fut qu'après avoir passé plus de deux heures à la fenêtre, admirant cet horizon qui parlait à son âme . . . que Fabrice s'écria tout à coup: Mais ceci est-il une prison? est-ce là ce que j'ai tant redouté?'

Mr. Levin speaks of the Citadel's 'chiaroscuro of spacious heights and claustrophobic depths'. Fabrice and Clélia are isolated in the same timeless world as Julien and Mathilde. For a moment they belong to 'the happy few'; Fabrice abandons himself to his *rêverie* and desires nothing better than to spend the rest of his days in the tower. But potent forces are working to destroy the idyll. The elegant superstructure of the Citadel is contrasted with the horrors of its depths where the appalling governor and his grotesque gaolers are planning to poison Fabrice; and the kitchens where the poison is prepared assume the sinister significance of a witch's cauldron.

There are other forces at work as well. Shortly after Fabrice reaches his 'cage' 'son attention fut violemment *rappelée à la réalité*'.¹ There is an immense commotion when the mongrel terrier dashes into the cage in pursuit of the rats which it kills. The rats are an emanation from the underworld, the dog a sign of vigilance—the vigilance of the despot watching over his prisoner and the vigilance of Fabrice's friends protecting him from danger, killing the rats as they defeat the attempts to poison him.

Ironically, both are working for his doom. In his description of the Tour Farnèse, Stendhal remarks:

'Cette seconde tour, comme le lecteur s'en souvient peut-être, fut élevée sur la plate-forme de la grosse tour, en l'honneur d'un prince héréditaire, qui, fort différent de l'Hippolyte, fils de Thésée, n'avait point repoussé les politesses d'une jeune belle-mère.'

It is a reference to the Duchess's love for her nephew, but the two stories ended differently. The prince spent the seventeen best years of his life in the tower, and only left when he succeeded his father on the throne. Fabrice's feelings towards the Duchess undergo a change:

'Une nuit Fabrice vint à penser un peu sérieusement à sa tante:

¹Italic mine.

il fut étonné, il eut peine à reconnaître son image; le souvenir qu'il conservait d'elle avait totalement changé; pour lui, à cette heure, elle avait cinquante ans.'

She becomes the 'mother' who can no longer penetrate *his* world, but it is her skilful planning which procures his return to *her* world. The immensely exciting escape is a *descent* into the world of political intrigue; but, adds Stendhal, 'tout était anéanti chez notre héros'. He looks back on his months in the Citadel as the happiest period of his life. He returns to the world and to his ecclesiastical career only to find that in losing Clélia, he has lost everything. He is more of an *étranger* than before, and the Duchess discovers with despair that he has also become an *étranger* for her. She may have procured his physical return, but spiritually he is further from her than when he was in prison.

Stendhal's attitude towards his 'hero' becomes extremely complex in the closing chapters of the novel. The Knight Errant is replaced by the medieval churchman, the famous preacher who empties the opera house and fills the churches with weeping crowds, though his only aim is to renew contact with Clélia. The novelist's attitude is certainly ironic when he tells us that, though extremely scrupulous in keeping her oath to the Madonna not to see Fabrice, the pious Clélia finally bestows the *dernières faveurs* in the dark. Nor are the favours withdrawn when Fabrice succeeds to the archiepiscopal see where 'his piety, his exemplary morals and his eloquence' soon made people forget his saintly predecessor. On the other hand, the note of tenderness seems to break in when, after the death of Clélia, Fabrice finally abandons the world:

'Fabrice était trop amoureux et trop croyant pour avoir recours au suicide; il espérait retrouver Clélia dans un meilleur monde, mais il avait trop d'esprit pour ne pas sentir qu'il avait beaucoup à réparer.'

The fate of the principal characters resembles that of Julien and Mme de Rênal. Clélia is dead and Fabrice, his sensibility exhausted, only lasts a year in the charterhouse. The death of Fabrice removes the Duchess's only hold on life and she, too, dies. Ernest V and Mosca are left in possession of the stage, and the book closes with a final stroke of irony:

'Les prisons de Parme étaient vides, le comte immensément riche, Ernest V adoré de ses sujets, qui comparaient son gouvernement à celui des grand-ducs de Toscane.'

The Count, who exchanged a military career for politics, has realized his ambition to 'gain a million'. That much is clear, but the rest of the sentence is characteristically ambiguous. The prisons are empty either because Ernest V is really a benevolent despot or because all the liberals are dead or in exile or because liberalism itself has died out. The Grand Dukes of Tuscany, to whom the Prince of Parma is compared, were notorious despots. It follows from this that his people worshipped him either because they really liked despotism or because they had become so down-trodden that they were not aware of it. The only other alternative is that Stendhal is pulling our leg and that his people secretly detested Ernest V. The novelist leaves us to work the answer out for ourselves. He was a liberal himself, but he had a poor opinion of other liberals and had no intention in this book of condemning one set of ideas and holding another set up to admiration. He is the urbane, cultured man-of-the-world, and the whole book is informed by a mellow wisdom. He obviously found life in Parma amusing and exciting and was not unappreciative of its grace. No doubt he felt that he could leave 'the happy few' to enjoy the performance.

V

CONCLUSION

'Et moi,' wrote Stendhal, 'je mets un billet à une loterie, dont le gros lot se réduit à ceci: être lu en 1935.'¹ Critics have marvelled at the accuracy with which he foretold the dates at which his work would become popular. It was neither wishful thinking nor a lucky guess. He knew that he was a great novelist and that he was very much in advance of his time. He could not foresee the exact conditions which would make him popular or which would prompt one of the brighter cabinet ministers to re-read *la Chartreuse de Parme* at a critical moment in 1938; but he may well have realized that the conditions which turned Julien Sorel and Fabrice del Dongo into 'outsiders' were bound to be aggravated and grow more acute.

The rise of the police State in Europe has no doubt given *la Chartreuse de Parme* a topical appeal which it did not possess between 1840 and 1920. War and revolution have hastened the

¹Henri Brulard, II, p. 8.

disintegration of the community life which Stendhal perceived with such clarity and which caused the predicament of Julien and Fabrice. Their predicament is rapidly becoming that of every civilized man. For the growth of the omniscient State and what Baudelaire contemptuously called 'the rising tide of democracy' have transformed even 'the happy few' into submerged *étrangers*.

This may well explain why Stendhal has a particular appeal for our generation; but the reasons for his ultimate greatness have nothing to do with superficial resemblances between his age and our own; they lie much deeper. We expect a great novelist to interpret his age and to anticipate changes which are taking place in the life of the race; but his books must also record something that happened to human nature as a whole, and that is what Stendhal's finest work does.

A German critic has suggested that he belongs to the Cartesian tradition and is only interested in 'moral experience and the mechanics and dynamics of the heart'.¹ His strength is certainly an eighteenth-century strength, and the traditional motifs of 'love' and 'ambition' play a large part in the novels; but this is not the whole of the story. He wrote at a time when great changes were taking place in the emotional life of the people and when it was becoming increasingly difficult to explain the complexity of the human mind in terms of traditional psychology. He did not make the mistake of jettisoning the whole of it; he made a breach in what had become a closed system and opened up fresh fields for exploration. His characters, like Constant's Adolphe, transcend the categories of Cartesian psychology, and they are a triumphant success because their creator succeeded in integrating his vision into the framework of everyday life as he succeeded in fitting his books into the framework of the classic novel.

'Ce personnage', said Stendhal of Mathilde de la Mole, 'est... imaginé bien en dehors des habitudes sociales qui parmi les siècles assureront un rang si distingué à la civilisation du XIX^e siècle.' His characters represent positive standards by which society is tested and condemned. It is because they stand outside the nineteenth century that they are closer to us than Flaubert's *ratés*. They impose themselves on their age; Flaubert's, one feels, are nothing but the product of their immediate environment. They

¹ Ernst Robert Curtius: *Französischer Geist im neuen Europa*, Berlin, 1925, p. 75.

are germ-carriers who are born with an incurable *maladie morale* and spend their aimless lives spreading the infection. Proust speaks of the narrator in his great work as being *entouré de son âme*. *Âme* is a word which occurs very frequently in Stendhal's writings, but it is a principle of vitality and not a veil which hangs between the writer and the world. Stendhal's ideal was the mixed life—the life of action and contemplation—which was becoming impossible in Europe. It is because the balance is held between the two until the moment comes for his characters' final retreat from the world that he made his discoveries about human nature without turning his characters into specimens who are studied on the dissecting table. His books are great psychological novels, but they are often as exciting to read as a *roman d'aventures*.

Stendhal was much more alive in his time, more conscious of its problems than his contemporaries and successors, and his vision has greater depth and greater breadth than theirs.¹ When we compare him with Balzac, we see that Balzac's 'vitality' was no more than a surface bustle which concealed a profoundly immature view of life. He was not, like Constant, an intellectual who happened to write a great novel, a solitary like Flaubert battling with problems of syntax while his sensibility atrophied or a recluse who surveyed the world from a cork-lined prison like Proust. He was a man of action and a contemplative, an intellectual who was also a born novelist. The originality of his vision and the discovery of a new psychological type have altered the whole perspective of European psychology and given him his immense stature. He seems to me to be the greatest French novelist as he is certainly the most civilized.

¹ Stendhal's stay in Italy produced *la Chartreuse de Parme*, Flaubert's African journey the disastrous *Salammbô*.

RENÉ LEIBOWITZ

INNOVATION AND
TRADITION IN
CONTEMPORARY MUSIC: III

ALBAN BERG:
OR THE SEDUCTION TO TRUTH

FEW artists nowadays have been misunderstood to the same extent as Alban Berg. What makes it worse is that it never seems to occur to the great majority of musicians and critics, who deal with the author of *Wozzeck* and *Lulu*, to doubt their own judgment or appreciation. Of course, this also applies to the other two composers whom I have discussed in this series of articles, but not quite as acutely. Indeed, some of the honest critics willingly admit that Schönberg and Webern are complex and involved cases and thus they imply that some of their observations may not be definitive. Even when these artists are completely discarded or condemned, such an attitude on the critic's part is usually based on arguments so false and so inadequate, that the term 'misunderstanding' cannot be used in connection with them. Webern, for instance, according to a great number of critics, simply does not seem to matter at all and I must admit that, in a way, such an opinion is a good thing, because at least it prevents these critics from writing the usual nonsense.

But what happens in Berg's case is not quite as simple. Let us leave aside those (their number is diminishing) who discard and condemn Berg along with his master and co-disciple. Apart from them nobody seems to think that there is the slightest difficulty in understanding his music. The result, so far, is a considerable amount of superficial and inadequate criticism.

Now it is my absolute conviction that, in fact, Berg is easier to grasp than Schönberg or Webern, but I disagree completely with the reasons habitually laid out to prove this point and, of course, I disagree even more with the conclusions drawn from such a 'proof'.

Let us examine this. The most commonplace attitude with regard to Berg is a perfect example of a false appraisal based on a logical blunder. Here it is: while Schönberg is more a theoretician than an artist (Webern of course being nothing at all), Berg is a real artist who has profited from his master's theories and, at the same time, has 'surpassed' him. Schönberg's music is 'abstract', Berg's is 'human', the former's is composed in a 'strictly mathematical system', the latter's has 'humanized' the system.¹ But, evidently, nobody ever undertakes to define the meaning of these terms and there is a good reason for that; applied as they are, definitions as 'abstract', 'human' or 'mathematical system' do not mean anything.

It is easy enough to see that such statements bear the evidence of a strange dialectic procedure: they intend to minimize Schönberg by praising Berg and to praise Berg by minimizing Schönberg. The fact that such a procedure is completely ridiculous ought to be obvious; I shall, however, endeavour to prove it.

To start with I must emphasize that the falsity of the so-called appraisals, as far as Berg is concerned, is sometimes deliberately aimed at by some of the critics in question. Thus Mr. Ansermet, whom some time ago I attacked on these grounds, finally admitted to me that the article in which he praised Berg would have been disapproved of by Berg himself.

We are then in a position to understand that, when they are at their best, these 'dialecticians' base their argument on the following premises. Schönberg is not a great artist, but he has transmitted some of his theoretical knowledge to his pupil Berg. The latter has learnt what he needed to learn, he has also always believed in the validity of his master's theories, but, being a great artist, he has, *in spite of himself*, transcended these theories. Once again, Berg would have disapproved entirely with all this, but, there you are, all this is nevertheless supposed to be true.

I call it a logical blunder. In the first place, praising Berg in such a strange fashion implies—as we shall see—that Berg was an imbecile and I cannot see how such an implication is praise. A great composer is a man who is aware of what he is doing. At any rate

¹ Such opinions have been textually stated by people like F. Poulenc, Roland Manuel, E. Ansermet and B. de Schloezer (who, I admit, has fortunately enough changed his mind) to name only French musicians. From what I know, however, the same state of affairs can be found in other countries.

when he chooses one master and not another, when he adopts one theory and not another, when he proceeds to solve one particular sort of problem instead of another, we must admit that he is lucid in doing so, else we fail to understand what lucidity can be. Given the axiomatic value of the proposition that Berg is a great composer (and I have every reason to agree with that), we must be confident that, just because he was a great composer, Berg knew what he was doing and did not achieve this or that in spite of himself. After all, a great composer is an artist who obviously has a deeper insight into profound musical problems and who handles them in a more radical and genuine way than a lesser composer and, before undertaking to praise him, we must trust to his absolute lucidity. The very fact that, during his whole career, Berg had been constantly preoccupied with the same 'theories' as Schönberg, proves that—unless he was an imbecile—the author of *Wozzeck* and *Lulu* must have believed in these theories, must have recognized their value and thus did not have to transcend or to 'humanize' them.

I do not think it necessary to demonstrate here that Schönberg is neither only a theoretician, nor a composer who uses a 'mathematical system', considering that in my preceding articles I have tried to give a fair picture of the significance of the activities of Schönberg and of Webern. But I shall add this: musical theory has no *a priori* existence; it is the result of musical composition and not *vice versa*. If a composer is a great theoretician, he must first be a great composer; if his theories have any value (and can be fruitful when adopted by other musicians), then his compositions must be valuable first. The distinction thus frequently made with regard to Schönberg's theoretical and compositional faculties, appears as a mere abstract judgement deprived of any concrete sense. Furthermore, a mathematical system can only lead to mathematics and not to music. To compose according to a mathematical system (as Schönberg is supposed to do) is a contradiction in terms. And if every theoretical system is merely theoretical by definition, the piece of music composed in it is never the system itself, but the better the music, the more rigorous and complete the system which can be derived from it.

If we admit all this, then it becomes evident that the bit of dialectics to which I have referred is not only illogical but completely senseless. Indeed, to minimize Schönberg means to

minimize Berg too, while in order to praise Berg, we must also praise Schönberg. Without doubt one can become a great composer after having had a bad master, but in such a case the very fact of becoming a great composer implies that, at one time or another, one has resolutely turned against one's master, instead of—as in Berg's case—following him in every discovery, adopting all his principles, reaching the same conclusions etc. Only an imbecile could waste his life by simply aping his master, but then, neither in spite of himself nor of anybody or anything else, could such an individual ever become a great composer. Berg, however, was not an imbecile, which is exactly what his so-called supporters would like to make of him (perhaps in spite of themselves, but only such people do something in spite of themselves). Berg also was, I think, a great composer and, once again, I imply that therefore he knew what he was doing. This is what I will now show.

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In my preceding article I have already referred to Berg's general attitude (which I have described as a lyrical one) and I have also defined Berg's place and function in the general course of musical tradition. We know now that it always had been Berg's main effort to create a strong link between the acquisitions of Schönberg and the tradition of the past, so that we can say that it is partly thanks to Berg that the Schönbergian idiom is now firmly established as the most genuine of contemporary incarnations in musical idiom in general. We shall meet with these problems again, but, before that, let us look at Berg's particular evolution and try to understand his participation in the constitution of the new idiom.

Such a participation can be found in his very first works. Like Webern, Berg met Schönberg in 1904 and like Webern he studied with Schönberg between 1904 and 1910. The *Seven Early Songs* (1905-1907) already show the work of an artist who is not only a pupil, but who, by adopting some of his master's principles, is consciously aware of the fundamental compositional problems of his time. The orchestration of these songs, which was made in 1928, proves: (a) that during his last years Berg did not disapprove of these early pieces which bear his master's impact and influence in every bar, (b) that some of the compositional devices which were implicit in the first version could be made explicit in the second, because the pupil had himself become a master. These

devices are essentially architectural and contrapuntal ones, which shows that even at a time when a lack of experience prevented Berg from expressing them with complete mastery, the main preoccupations of that period were not alien to him.

* * *

The *Piano Sonata* op. 1 (1908) contains even more preoccupations of the same kind and expresses them more acutely. They are: utmost consequence in the handling of the complete chromatic possibilities within the tonal system, which leads to bold and new melodic and harmonic features, a strong tendency to the use of counterpoint without prejudice to absolute harmonic control and, above all, a fanatical observance of the main Schönbergian principle of composition: the simultaneous achievement of logic and variety, with which we are already familiar. The manner in which this principle is handled by Berg in his op. 1 is extremely significant. It proves that far from being simply influenced by his master, Berg is entirely convinced and aware of the necessity of composing in so rigorous a way. The reader will perhaps remember that we made a similar observation about Webern's *Passacaglia* op. 1, which means that both these artists participate actively in the elaboration of a radical method of composition which was to lead to and culminate in the twelve-tone technique.

Here are a few details which show us Berg eagerly travelling on this road.

The piano sonata opens with a characteristic melody of three bars, which constitutes the first phrase of the first theme. This phrase is divided in three motives. The first one is based on a series of two intervals (fourth and augmented fourth; its origin can be found in the second theme of Schönberg's *Chamber Symphony* op. 9), while the second motif varies these intervals by diminishing them (major thirds = diminished fourths) and by presenting them in contrary motion (descending instead of ascending). Motif three uses only the semitone, an interval to be found in motif one (first and last sounds). The accompaniment uses practically all through the same intervals.

Furthermore it is possible to say that all the following melodic material, however different from the first phrase it may appear (utmost variety!) is nothing but perpetual variation of the initial 'germ' (utmost economy and logic!). Thus the second phrase of

the first theme starts with motif two (varied rhythmically), introduces several times motif three (also in different variations) and continues with a sharp variation of motif one, which lays the stress on the relationship existing between motives one and three.¹

In a similar way the second theme is related to the first. It is built principally on variations of motives one and three.²

These few remarks make our point clear: Berg is absolutely lucid with regard to Schönberg's lesson. There is nothing in his op. 1 which is done in spite of himself, on the contrary, everything is the result of a radical awareness.

★ ★ ★

The same remarks go for the following works. Op. 2 (1909) is a cycle of four songs with piano, in which Berg for the first time follows his master on the path of the suspension of the classical tonal functions.³

An interesting application of the famous Schönbergian principle can be found in the second song. It starts with an expressive melody stated by the voice, while the piano seems to provide simply an harmonic accompaniment. The second phrase of the voice, which introduces a strong contrast, proves to be identical with the upper part of the initial piano chords.

The suspension of tonality becomes complete in the *String Quartet* op. 3 (1910), the last work which Berg composed under Schönberg's direct supervision. The principle of composition remains the same, the melodic, harmonic and contrapuntal freedom achieved in the new style creates extremely interesting relationships between horizontal and vertical features, thus foretelling one of the main aspects of the future twelve-tone technique.

In this respect we find several highly specific items in the

¹ Motif 1 is originally G-C-F sharp. The new variation is E-E flat-A. If played simultaneously both series give birth to the same chord (transposed). The relationship between motifs 1 and 3. becomes evident (cf. the semitone E-E flat).

² Even the characteristic figure of six semiquavers which leads into the conclusive part is based entirely on variations of motif three. The long conclusive phrase itself is nothing but an augmentation of the semiquaver figure.

³ Only in the last song. But the third one is characteristic too, because beginning and end are in two different tonalities.

following work: *Five Songs for Voice and Orchestra* op. 4 (1912). One of the songs begins and ends with a twelve-tone chord, another one uses a melody which is a twelve-tone series. Apart from that, Berg follows his master on the path of progressive dissolution of the tonal functions and of continuous enlargement of instrumental possibilities, the orchestration of these songs being one of extreme boldness and radicalism in conception.

All these remarks can also apply to the *Four Pieces for Clarinet and Piano* op. 5 (1913) and to the *Three Orchestral Pieces* op. 6 (1914).¹ In the former Berg tries out the 'ultra-short' forms (first started by Schönberg in his *Six Small Piano Pieces* op. 19 and, as we know, carried to such extremes by Webern); the latter bears witness to Berg's struggle for vast forms, to which he was to cling for the rest of his life.

★ ★ ★

Up to this point in his development Berg's main effort has consisted in assimilating the chief technical principles promoted by his master, Arnold Schönberg. Berg is now himself a master, which means that he has experienced all the resources of musical composition and has mastered them. At the same time his endeavours in this direction have necessarily brought him into contact with almost all the forms of musical composition, which is, as I have already said,² one of the principal aspects of the universality of the Schönbergian idiom. Indeed, like Schönberg himself and also like Webern, Berg has by now more or less written at least one work in every definite 'genre': a piano work (the sonata op. 1), two vocal works with piano (the seven early songs and the four songs op. 2), one vocal work with orchestra (the five songs op. 4), two chamber music works (the string quartet op. 3 and the clarinet pieces op. 5) and one score for full orchestra (the three pieces op. 6).

If once more we take a look at this score, we find that the universality of the Schönbergian idiom here enters into a new phase of which Berg is the main promoter. Apart from the Schönbergian influence, the *Three Orchestral Pieces* show a very close connection with the world of Mahler and Debussy, two musicians to whom Berg's music was to remain forever related. In these pieces the deep and genuine significance, the essential

¹ They are the two first works of Berg's dedicated to Arnold Schönberg, the latter for his fortieth birthday.

² Cf. the first article in this series.

raison d'être of the Schönberg school appears suddenly in its full meaning, not, to quote my own terms, as 'an esoteric sect, using its own private idiom', but as the advanced outpost of the musical creation of its time.

Two centuries back, Bach had been in a similar situation: at a time when the new tonal idiom was to reach its definitive structure in the works of Bach, these works achieve a colossal synthesis of all the main musical trends of the time.

Such is precisely the case of Arnold Schönberg at the moment when the consequent use of the complete chromatic possibilities was leading to the foundation of a new idiom. All of the important composers before the last war were working at such a task: Mahler, Schönberg, Berg and Webern in Austria, Strauss and Reger in Germany, Stravinsky and Scriabine in Russia, Bela Bartok in Hungary, Debussy, Satie, Fauré and Ravel in France, De Falla in Spain, even Puccini in Italy. All their efforts are represented, synthesized and carried to their furthest consequences in the works of Schönberg and, just as it has been Berg's task to emphasize the links between his master and the past, in the same way, from his *Three Orchestral Pieces* on, Berg establishes the connection between Schönberg and the contemporary outer musical world.

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One specific musical genre, however, had not yet received its complete solution in the Schönbergian universe: the opera.¹ Of course, Schönberg in his two dramatic works, *Erwartung* op. 17 and *Die Glueckliche Hand* op. 18, had already laid the basis for a strictly operatic endeavour; his own works, however, in spite of their admirable musical and dramatic significance, are not real operas, or rather, they may be considered as the forerunners of a new musical form and not as solutions to a traditional problem.²

¹ In the list of works by Berg we do not yet find a choral composition, but both Schönberg and Webern had already by this date contributed to this form, the former in his *Gurre-Lieder* and in his *a-capella* chorus, op. 13, the latter in his chorus op. 2. Berg himself was never to write a strictly choral composition, but in both his operas we find similar forms. On the other hand, Webern was never to write an opera, but his numerous song cycles make use of the various operatic *modi di cantare*.

² Apparently Schönberg's last opera, *Moses and Aaron*, started some fifteen years ago and on the conclusion of which he is working now, will carry the form first used in his opp. 17 and 18 to a very advanced stage.

By setting out to reach such a solution, Berg once more appears in his genuine role. The result was to be *Wozzeck*, an opera in three acts (based on the dramatic fragments by Georg Büchner), on which Berg worked between 1915 and 1922.

The compositional principles which we have discussed so far, are now applied on a very large scale. The chief difficulty which Berg had to face was the achievement of unity without the help of one of the most powerful devices ever used in such vast forms: tonality. The only way to solve the problem was to cling more strongly than ever to Schönberg's principle of perpetual variation and to its premises and consequences: thematic economy and extreme logic of form. Berg manages this task in the following way: every scene of the drama carries with it its specific symphonic form. The first act is a series of *pièces de genre* which find their best musical equivalent in certain instrumental forms, such as: *Suite, Military March, Rhapsody*, etc.; the five long scenes of the second act are treated musically as a *symphony* in five movements; the last act gives birth to a series of *inventions*. Apart from this, close relationships are established between the different scenes (a secondary item of a scene may, for instance, become a primary feature in the next scene, etc.), and finally, many characteristic procedures indicate those of the twelve-tone technique, which was to be created shortly after the composition of this work.

With his opera *Wozzeck* Berg not only contributes to the enrichment of the new musical idiom, but he also saves a tradition which was completely decadent at the time.

'A symphony for large orchestra with the accompaniment of a human voice'; if this ironical phrase with which Schönberg describes what had become of the post-Wagnerian opera is indeed more than just a joke, then it is without doubt in *Wozzeck* that the definitive restitution of opera to its authentic place in tradition occurs.

* * *

The two works which follow *Wozzeck* determine an essential phase in Berg's evolution. They are the *Chamber Concerto* for violin, piano, and thirteen wind instruments (1923-24)¹ and the *Lyric Suite* for string quartet (1925-26). In the first place they are both chamber works, the first ones written since the *Clarinet Pieces* (1913), and the last he was ever to write. I have already

¹ Dedicated to Schönberg for his fiftieth birthday.

insisted that the re-establishment of chamber music to its full rights was one of Schönberg's highest achievements. At the same time Schönberg reintroduces free instrumental choice which had been lost since Mozart. Both these acts are intimately connected with the restitution of counterpoint. All this may be observed in Berg's *Chamber Concerto*. It is the work of someone who was aware in the highest degree of these problems. Here the new instrumental spirit produces the following combinations: the orchestral body uses nine woodwinds and four brass instruments; furthermore, the first movement is written for piano and orchestra, the second for violin and orchestra, then comes a *cadenza* for the two soloists, and finally the last movement is composed for both soloists with orchestra. Contrapuntally the climax is reached in the last movement, which does not use any new material of any sort but combines simultaneously the complete material which had appeared consecutively in the first two movements. Indeed movements 1 and 2 are practically 'superimposed', if I may say so, which is perhaps one of the most striking examples of musical economy that I know. Generally speaking, it is interesting to note how strongly Berg remains attached to this kind of thematic unity. Not only does it reveal his fundamental lyricism,¹ but also his situation in the Schönberg school. Indeed Schönberg's compositional radicalism begins with his String Quartets, Nos. 1 and 2 (opp. 7 and 10) and with his *Chamber Symphony* op. 9, where absolute thematic unity is the basic compositional device; later on, however, Schönberg was to become freer in this respect until, by the very formulation of the twelve-tone technique, the same device appears as part of the technical apparatus itself. Even then Schönberg does not always lay great stress on thematic unity as such, the perpetual variation being achieved by the specific structure of the new technique.

Berg's attitude, however, is one of intense loyalty to the absolute thematic technique as emphasized in Schönberg's opp. 7, 9 and 10, three works of his masters which he never ceased to admire and to praise.² Thus once again the historical process of Schönberg's evolution is demonstrated *ad oculos* by Berg.

¹ Cf. the *Tragic Art of Anton Webern*, HORIZON No. 88.

² As a teacher Berg always gave a lot of time to the analysis of these works. Factually it seems impossible to reach an understanding of the essential problems of contemporary music without a complete study of them.

The *Chamber Concerto* bears yet further evidence to the authenticity which determines Berg's development. Looking back on Schönberg's activity, we are in a position to say that it is intentionally directed towards the twelve-tone technique. If Berg himself as we assume was a lucid artist and not an 'imitator', we must find the same trend in his activity. Indeed, that is what we have already hinted at while dealing with some of his earlier works. In the *Chamber Concerto* (like Webern in his opp. 15 and 16), Berg comes so close to the basic principles of the new technique that it becomes possible to imagine that had Schönberg not discovered it, Berg would probably have done so sooner or later. The first movement opens on a twelve-tone phrase, and the opening theme of the second is based on a twelve-tone series which is used three times consecutively. Moreover, the characteristic melodic variation procedures which were to become the very foundation of the twelve-tone technique, are used by Berg as essential compositional and architectural devices. All the main themes of the work appear in their four-serial forms: *original*, *retrograde*, *inversion* and *retrograde-inversion*. Thus the adoption of the twelve-tone technique in the *Lyric Suite* is not surprising. The portions of this work where the new technique is used¹ represent a decisive step, and from then on, Berg was to travel on a road completely determined by one of the greatest acquisitions of musical art.

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Berg's last works are: *The Wine* (1928), an aria for soprano voice and orchestra (based on three poems by Baudelaire); *Lulu* (1929-35), an opera in three acts (based on two tragedies: *Erdegeist* and *Die Büchse der Pandora* by Wedekind);² a *Concerto* for violin and orchestra (1935).

They contain all the typical elements with which we are familiar, but their significance lies chiefly in a new endeavour, the

¹The first movement is entirely a twelve-tone piece. The third movement uses the new technique in its main part, while the fifth adopts it in its middle part. The sixth and last is again a twelve-tone piece. Thus exactly half of the work is composed in the twelve-tone technique while the other half once more lays out the process which leads to it.

²The opera is dedicated to Schönberg for his sixtieth birthday; its composition is entirely completed; the orchestration, however, is incomplete in the third act of which only a few scenes are finished. The first performance (Zürich, 1937) was given thus.

most definitive acquisition of Berg's particular attitude. What the author of *Lulu* and of the *Violin Concerto* tries above all to achieve is a restitution of genuine and new tonal functions with the means of the twelve-tone technique. That such a step had to be undertaken is obvious. Its necessity resides in its very possibility. If tonality is to be transcended sooner or later, such a state of affairs can only be reached once all the problems of tonality are entirely solved. After the suspension of the classical tonal functions which occurred around 1908, after the creation of the twelve-tone technique which occurred in 1923 and which as we know is nothing but a technical apparatus capable of promoting a consequent application of the principle of perpetual variation, after all this one problem remained: *to test the last possibilities of tonality in the light of the new compositional medium*. Such was the task which, logically enough, Berg ascribed to himself as soon as he had mastered the new technique.¹ Once more such a task is characteristic of Berg's attitude in general: by using his master's most radical acquisition—the twelve-tone technique—in order to produce new tonal functions, Berg consolidates the links between old and new idiom, thus stressing that musical idiom is never either old or new, but that it follows its logical course, carried forward by the powerful stream of the tradition of polyphony.

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Without the art of Schönberg neither the art of Webern nor of Berg is conceivable, and yet even Schönberg's art acquires a higher, a more universal significance, thanks to the art of his two principal disciples. It has been the object of this series of articles to show the specific functions of the three composers who, in my opinion, represent the most important manifestation of contemporary music, three composers in whose works we find the most advanced and purest solutions to the problems of the musical idiom of today. I think that it ought to seem obvious now that praising one of them means praising them all, and that it is quite impossible to minimize one without at the same time (in spite of oneself!) minimizing the others. Considering the common

¹It is revealing to note that after Berg's death Schönberg found himself in the necessity of furthering the same experience which explains some of his recent works like the *Organ Variations* op. 40, the *Ode to Napoleon* op. 41, the *Band Variations* op. 43 and even the *Piano Concerto* op. 42.

attitude to Berg to which I have referred at the beginning of this article, I think that one is justified in saying that Berg is a greatly misunderstood composer.

On the other hand, it becomes evident that Berg's main characteristics—if it were only for his more traditional appearance—make him an artist easier to understand than Schönberg or Webern. That is what many young musicians realize when they begin their 'Schönbergian career', by being in the first place attracted to Berg. From what I have said concerning Berg's historical position it is also quite logical to 'go through' Berg first before getting as far as Schönberg or Webern.

If there is any sense in Kierkegaard's saying that in order to reach truth one must be seduced to it, nobody proves it better than Berg. Where Schönberg offers the fantastic riches of his powerful and complex mind, where Webern leads us to the limits of purity and distinction, Berg, in his brilliant lyrical style, creates a seduction of which few musicians are capable. Not the seduction of cheap propaganda where end and means seem to be equally debased in one single, formidable confusion, but the seduction by true means and to a true end, the seduction to truth itself.



GORDON ONSLOW FORD: Sketch for an unfinished painting, 'The Future of the Falcon'. 1947



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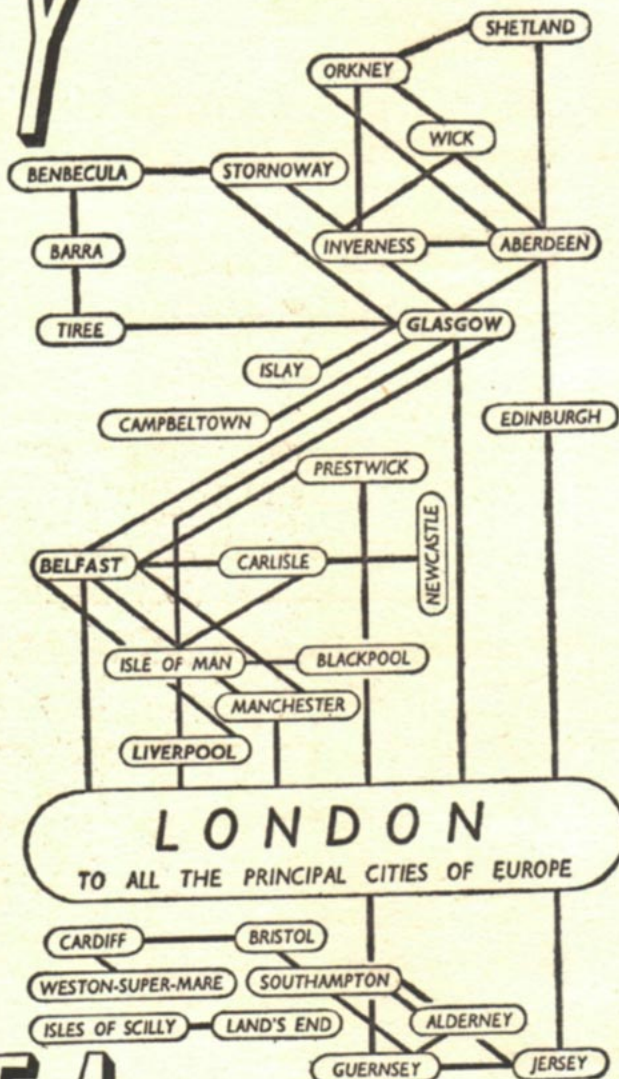
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